



CONTRACT
Summer
talks
go on

The union is
making
progress.

PAGE 3

NEW YEAR, NEW MEMBERS

The union kicked off the Fall 2019 semester by greeting new faculty and staff, and signing up hundreds of new members across campuses. In the post-*Janus* environment, this kind of new member engagement is a yearlong effort.

PAGE 6

ELECTIONS

Spring vote results

Members at CUNY and the Research Foundation elected new chapter leaders and delegates in the spring. The new leaders are eager to serve.

PAGE 5

HEALTH

More water testing at SPS

After some grassroots organizing, union activists at the School of Professional Studies won more lead testing of the building's drinking water.

PAGE 4

RETIREES

Crisis at TRS continues

Six months after the union demanded retiree salary information from CUNY, retirees are still being shorted on pension payments.

PAGE 4



REPORT

Dept. chairs face austerity

A new PSC study shows how the University's department chairs are overworked, underpaid and overburdened. CUNY can fix this.

PAGE 9



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006. EMAIL: APAUL@PSCMAIL.ORG.

Eye on health

● “Health coverage for new hires,” in May’s *Clarion*, reports that after July 1, new hires in city jobs (including in CUNY) will be in HIP and cannot choose another health plan for a full year. This giveback, agreed to by the Municipal Labor Committee, of which the PSC is a member, will pay a portion of wage increases for some MLC member unions.

This is just the latest and most painful example of the erosion of our employer-provided health benefits. But there is no doubt that more is coming. Some ominous signs:

1) According to the city’s website, the city and the MLC have set up a committee to address “the longer term sustainability of health care for workers,” which will recommend, “modifications to the way in which health care is currently provided or funded by June 30, 2020.”

2) This May, all Suffolk County public-sector unions agreed that, for the first time, members would pay 2 percent of their salary toward

their health benefits; this wipes out the first year of their contract’s wage increases.

3) School districts across New York State are facing long-term unsustainable health care cost increases.

With the cost of health benefits rising faster than workers’ salaries, the question is will we sacrifice health benefits to protect salaries, or vice versa?

All of us should be supporting single-payer initiatives, like the New York Health Act or Medicare for All, since they will eliminate health care as a subject of bargaining, freeing up money for wage increases and will put the brakes on runaway health care costs for everyone. But the MLC has decided to oppose the New York Health Act, and has not responded to offers by the Act’s legislative sponsors that

would alleviate the MLC’s concerns. This makes no sense for the rank-and-file of the MLC-member unions, who will give back more and more in salary, or benefits, or both, the longer the current health care system continues. PSC should call for its sisters and brothers in the MLC to step forward and get the best health act possible.

Robert Nelson
The Graduate Center, retired

The union responds: Thanks for your letter. The PSC has been a leading, if minority, voice within the MLC in support of the position that New York’s public-sector unions should use our collective power to ensure that changes are made in the New York Health Act so that it can be embraced by all unions.

At its best, the labor movement has been about advancing the lives and health of all workers, not only those in our own union. The MLC unions that oppose the bill raise serious and legitimate concerns about its impact on existing benefits, benefits that were often won by making

sacrifices on salary in the public sector. But I am still hopeful that the MLC can work with the sponsors of the legislation to achieve a bill that works for all. Meanwhile, it’s important for readers to know that a major accomplishment by the MLC in the current round of bargaining was to reject the imposition of mandatory health insurance premium payments by City workers.

We managed to preserve NYC health insurance as a program with a premium-free option—exactly because we were aware of the constantly rising premiums in Suffolk County and almost everywhere else. The only real solution, however, is universal healthcare.

Don’t believe the hype

● The “Medicare Part B reimbursement update” in the May *Clarion* makes it appear that the *Clarion* staff get information from the City’s Office of Labor Relations and uncritically repeat what they’re told.

As a TIAA retiree, my reimbursement arrives in the form of a check.

It arrived on May 20. It couldn’t possibly have been mailed in April as the *Clarion* reports.

The article goes on to note that the “standard Medicare Part B deduction” is \$134 per month, yet my reimbursement continues to be computed as if the deduction had been \$109. The annualized difference of \$300 is euphemistically described as the “differential.” A more accurate characterization would be “money due retirees but paid only after an unconscionable delay of nearly a year.” My own 2017 differential check didn’t arrive until April 19, 2019.

However, *Clarion* says those retirees who file for IRMAA reimbursement will receive their differential in November 2019. (Those who don’t will have to wait until spring 2020.)

I’m dubious. I filed for IRMAA reimbursement each of the last two years and never received my differential before March of the subsequent year. We retirees are wondering if November 2019 will turn into spring 2020.

Do the *Clarion* staff believe everything that OLR tells them or are they willing to learn from union membership what the real story is?

Michael Engber
City College, retired

Clarion responds: There is no question that the Medicare Part B reimbursement process is fraught, particularly for TIAA pension participants, because the city’s system is geared to the defined benefit plans. Clarion does its best to question the city’s claims, and your corrections are much appreciated. The goal of the article was to alert retirees to the general Medicare Part B reimbursement process and timing and to provide sources for attempting to solve problems (of which there are far too many).

Correction: In an article in the May issue, “Recalling 50 years since the CCNY strike,” former City College professor of sociology L’Heureux Lewis-McCoy is quoted as saying that only two of the 40 new faculty members hired in the last year were black or Latino. This was not accurate. Lewis-McCoy, now of New York University, clarified, “When I was hired, in 2007, only two out of 40 or so new faculty hired were black or Latino.”

Editor’s Note: Clarion reserves the right to edit all letters submitted for publication.

Union helps hero student

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

At 19 years old, Bronx Community College student Lucas Silverio had a lifetime of giving ahead of him. If a subway panhandler asked for money, he would give it. If a stranger wanted to talk to him, he would stop and listen. Silverio was studying to become a physical therapist.

Instead, he died in June from injuries sustained from a late-night apartment fire in the Bronx, in which he braved the choking smoke and fumes to rescue a 3-year-old girl who got separated from her mother. They both were able to leave the burning building, but he and the girl died days later.

URGE TO HELP

“He had a deep and sincere urge to help anyone he could. He gave off that positive and compassionate vibe every time he walked into the classroom,” said David Puglia, an assistant professor of English who had taught Silverio. “When I read about Lucas’s heroics, I was shocked but not surprised. His actions were perfectly in line with his character and the way he chose to live life.”

At the June PSC delegate assembly, an announcement was made about Silverio’s heroics and tragic death. Union members at the delegate assembly donated nearly \$1,000.

By ARI PAUL

They chanted in Spanish to bring the point home. “Gómez, escucha! Estamos en la lucha!”

The phrase – chanted by 40 PSC members and CUNY students, and directed at Hostos Community College President David Gómez on the street outside the college’s main entrance on July 31 – was a declaration that “we’re in the struggle” to retain full teaching capacity in the CLIP (CUNY Language Immersion Program) at Hostos. During the demonstration, union members demanded the administration work to ensure sufficient funding for CLIP – an intensive program for improving reading, writing and other skills for students for whom English is not their first language – to avoid cutting classes for students and laying off full-time, unionized instructors. There are approximately 75 instructors in nine CLIP programs CUNY-wide, and it has existed for more than 20 years.

Rumors had started in June of funding problems for CLIP. By the end of the month, full-time CLIP instructors at several community colleges had received non-reappointment letters. PSC President

Cuts to ESL

Barbara Bowen sent a letter expressing concern that such a valuable program was being cut back when enrollment is not an issue and urging affected colleges to close the funding gap out of their budgets. At Bronx Community College, the college restored enough funding to the

program to maintain 10 classes and all full-time CLIP instructors. CLIP instructors at BMCC organized and, with the support of their chapter, sent a letter to the president and scheduled a rally on campus at the end of July, but the president provided additional funding before then. All CLIP instructors at BMCC were reappointed, the chapter said.

Continued on page 10



Members protest cuts to CLIP at Hostos Community College.

Clarion SEPTEMBER 2019

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York, collective bargaining representative of the CUNY instructional staff. Vol. 48, No. 4. PSC/CUNY is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 2334), AFL-CIO, the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State United Teachers. Published by PSC/CUNY, 61 Broadway, 15th floor, New York, NY 10006. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Website: www.psc-cuny.org. Email: apaul@psccmail.org. All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

PSC OFFICERS: Barbara Bowen, President; Andrea Vázquez, First Vice President; Nivedita Majumdar, Secretary; Sharon Persinger, Treasurer; Michael Fabricant, Steven London, George Emilio Sanchez, Luke Elliott-Negri, Alia Tyner-Mullings, University-Wide Officers; Penny Lewis, Vice President Senior Colleges; James Davis, Michael Batson, David Hatchett, Senior College Officers; Lorraine Cohen, Vice President Community Colleges; Michael Spear, Sharon Utakis, Howard Meltzer, Community College Officers; Iris Delutro, Vice President Cross Campus Units; Janet Winter, Jacqueline Elliott, Cross Campus Officers; Joan Greenbaum, Steve Leberstein, Retiree Officers; Carly Smith, Vice President Part-Time Personnel; Susan DiRaimo, Blanca Vázquez, Meg Feeley, Part-Time Officers; Irwin H. Polishook, President Emeritus; Peter I. Hoberman, Vice President Emeritus, Cross-Campus Units.

STAFF: Deborah Bell, Executive Director; Naomi Zauderer, Associate Executive Director; Faye H. Alladin, Coordinator, Financial Services; Renée Lasher, Director, Contract Administration; Deirdre Brill, Director, Organizing; Francis Clark, Coordinator, Communications; Barbara Gabriel, Coordinator, Office Services and Human Resources; Kate Pfordresher, Director, Research & Public Policy; Diana Rosato, Coordinator, Membership Department; Peter Zwiebach, Director of Legal Affairs.

Editor: Ari Paul / Associate Editor: Shomial Ahmad / Designer: Margarita Aguilar / Copy Editors: Teri Duerr, Matt Schlecht
© 2019 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

Contract talks intensify over summer

By ARI PAUL

Classes may have started at the end of August, but the union's bargaining team has been hard at work over the summer to reach a contract agreement with CUNY.

The good news is that the union and university management agree substantial progress has been made in the summer months. PSC Secretary Nivedita Majumdar said, "The PSC bargaining team members have been hard at work throughout the summer, often setting aside their own personal and professional plans. It is intense work requiring both an overall clarity with regard to the rationale and purpose of each demand as well as a close eye for detail. Backed by the power built through our members' engagement and actions, we continue to press CUNY management for a contract with improved work conditions, raises for all, and a settlement that will have a transformative impact on our adjunct members. We hope to announce a proposed contract settlement within the next few weeks."

The bargaining team said in a message, "As a bargaining team, we have kept our eyes firmly on the prize throughout the nego-

Union reports progress in bargaining



Activists handed out pamphlets at the Brooklyn College graduation ceremony this spring.

tiations: a contract that includes raises across the board every year, additional equity increases for the lowest-paid full-time positions and an end to CUNY's wage injustice for adjunct faculty. The PSC set a standard for a transformation in adjunct pay in this round by demand-

ing \$7K per three-credit course for adjuncts. Our current bargaining agenda is the most ambitious the union has ever proposed, and we believe that we have built the power to pursue it."

Much of the back-and-forth has revolved around the complex funding structure of the PSC-CUNY contract – "PSC leadership has also been active in advocacy with New York State and

City governments, both of which must approve any proposed settlement," the team said.

The union is keeping its eyes on the prize.

The intense summer contract talks come after months of demonstrations by union members demanding a fair contract. At the end of the Spring 2019 semester, members and students gave leaflets to students and students' families during gradua-

tion ceremonies highlighting the need for a just contract. Students wore PSC stickers on their caps and gowns, and family members spoke to rank-and-file members about the contract campaign. Novelist and critic Roxane Gay, who received an honorary degree during the graduation ceremony for the Graduate Center, highlighted the contract demands and, in a tweet, posed for a PSC photo and said, "Pay the CUNY adjuncts the \$7K a class they are asking for. Honestly that's not enough but it's a start."

THE NEW CHIEF

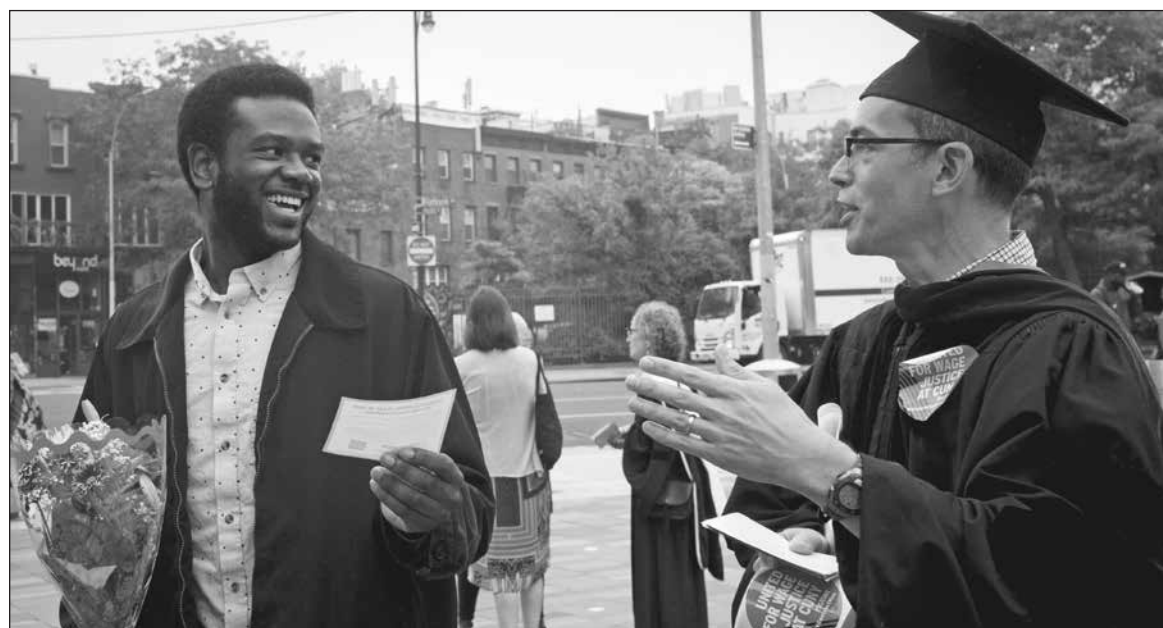
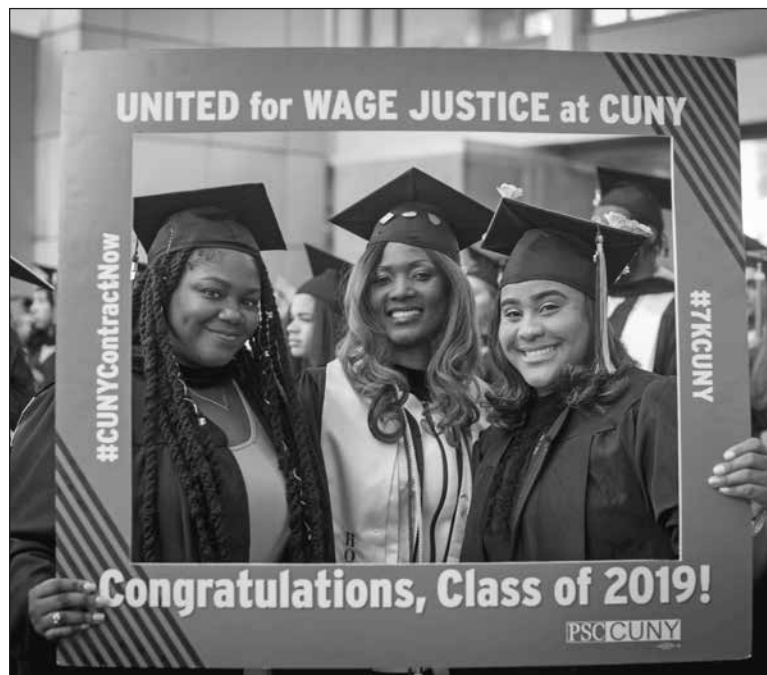
The union leadership has worked strategically with the opportunity provided by the appointment of a new chancellor, Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, whose first academic year in the position begins this Fall.

The last PSC-CUNY contract expired on November 30, 2017.

The ratification process

The road from handshake to final ratification is a democratic one.

When the PSC and CUNY bargaining teams agree on a proposed contract, it will then go the union's Executive Council for approval. If approved by the EC, the proposal will go to the union's Delegate Assembly, which will vote on whether or not to recommend the proposal for ratification. As in the past, members will receive detailed information about any proposed agreement and will have opportunities to discuss it before members cast votes. Both the PSC membership and the CUNY Board of Trustees must approve the contract.



Students rallied for faculty and staff at spring graduations.

PSC members force water tests at SPS

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

Winning the guarantee of clean and safe drinking water at the School of Professional Studies (SPS) has not been easy. PSC activists have waged a years-long battle, and they recently secured another victory: SPS administration agreed to the PSC's demand to test four recently installed water fountains located in a building with a history of bad water quality. The fountains in question were tested on May 22 and the results found no metals in the water fountains, said Susan Fountain, an adjunct professor at the School of Professional Studies who has been organizing around the issue.

"I'm relieved that there's a place that [faculty, staff and students] can get decent water," said Fountain.

This peace of mind was earned not through any safety initiative on the administration's part, but thanks to union organizing.

ONE VOICE

More than 20 PSC members showed up to an April 30 town hall meeting about water quality where CUNY Director of Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management Howard Apsan fielded questions.

"All those people were there and they spoke with one voice," said Fountain. "They made it known that they were concerned."

Faculty and staff who work at 119 West 31st Street, where SPS and

No lead in new fountains

Guttman Community College hold classes, have been dealing with water issues for several years, as first reported by *Clarion* in March 2017. There have been elevated levels of copper – above the EPA action level of 1.3 parts per billion and lead below the EPA action level of 15 parts per billion – detected in some of the building's drinking water.

The union is fixing an ongoing issue at SPS.

Fountain recalled SPS's response was to hand out bottled water. She also noted there was poor communication and inadequate information, and a reluctance to take corrective action where results were below EPA action levels. Each time, PSC activists demanded that water be tested and the results shared.

"When management doesn't release the full test results, they're taking away [workers' and students'] abilities to make their own health decisions," Fountain said. "My argument is to get the info out to people so they can make their own choice on whether or not to drink the water."

Near the beginning of 2018, new water fountains were installed in hallways, but were not turned on until months later in December 2018. SPS had promised that the fountains would be tested before they were turned on. They were not. Instead, they were tested five months later, after organized pressure from the PSC.

In September of 2018, water coolers appeared next to the non-functioning water fountains without explanation. It was only months later – and only after union pressure – that union activists found out that water quality testing done in six office suites in August had found lead levels in four of the fountains, including one with levels only slightly below the EPA action level.

FEDERAL LEVELS

No level of lead in water is safe, according to a senior administrator at the EPA's Office of Water who was interviewed for a story by NPR. When the EPA drafted the Lead and Copper Rule, the NPR report noted, it designed the rule in terms of what could be reasonably achieved rather than defining safe levels. The Safe Drinking Water Act, passed by Congress in 1974, sets non-enforceable maximum contaminant levels goals (MCLGs), which are safe levels that will likely not cause any adverse health effects. And for lead, EPA set that level at zero. The EPA website notes that lead is persistent and bio-accumulates over time. In adults it

can contribute to high blood pressure and decreased kidney function, among other health effects.

"For many water contaminants, the MCLGs designate a tolerable level of exposure that can be sustained without risk of health effects," said Jean Grassman, co-

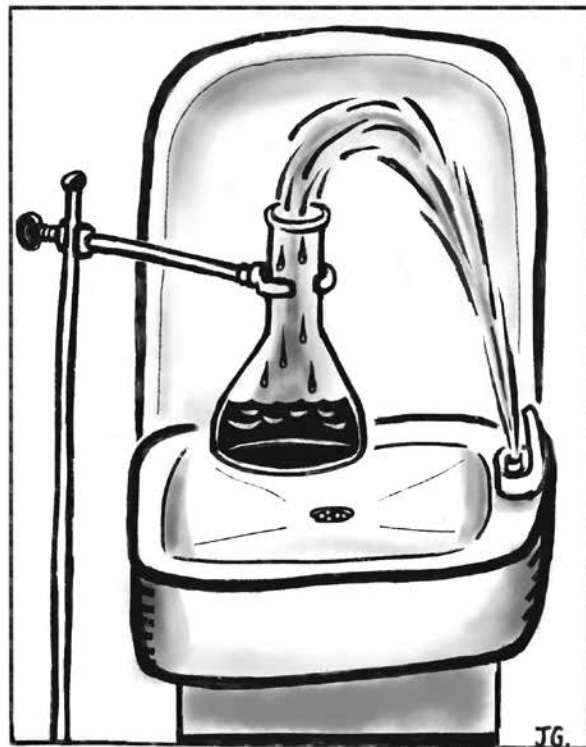
"Lead is different. The epidemiological evidence clearly shows that there's no safe level of exposure. We're really concerned about women who might be pregnant and not know that they are placing their unborn children at risk."

Kelly Cunningham, a communications and publications design coordinator at the school, drinks the water every day with a little bit of reservation. She went to the town hall meeting, despite having multiple deadlines, and voiced her concerns.

"I was speaking from the perspective of having the water fountains tested and doing an annual testing of the water," Cunningham said. "We should have some reassurance." Cunningham thinks that there are proactive steps the administration can take to ensure and monitor water quality, and testing the water fountains is one of those steps.

Fountain said this latest win "is small but huge at the same time."

"I can only attribute it to so many people turning out [and expressing concern]," Fountain said. "It moved the needle." Because of past problems with the building's water, PSC activists will continue to push for ongoing monitoring of the water at SPS.



Jud Guitreau

PSC continues to press TRS and CUNY for action

By ARI PAUL

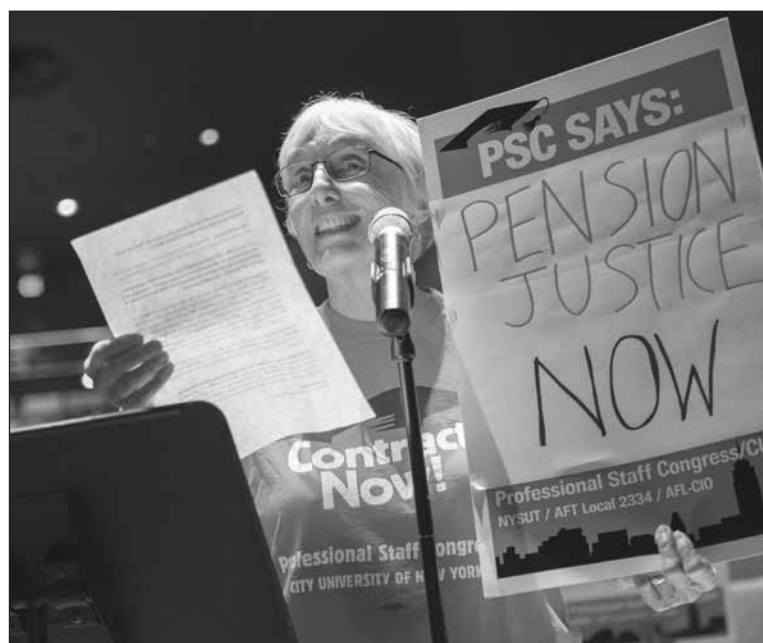
Last December PSC retirees blasted CUNY Board of Trustees (BOT) members for CUNY's failure to send updated payroll information to the Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), leaving about two hundred TRS retirees receiving pension payments below what they were actually owed. CUNY employees who had retired between April 20, 2012, and January 2017 received whatever retroactive pay increase they had been due in January 2017, but the records of those increases and whatever pension deductions had been taken were not sent to TRS at the time.

TWO-YEAR WAIT

More than two years later, in June 2019, retirees affected by the enduring payroll snafu submitted testimony to the board again about their plight, asserting that CUNY was sending a message that the University simply does not care about its former employees.

"The TRS pensioners victimized by CUNY Payroll devoted anywhere from 20 to 50 years of their adult work lives to CUNY,"

CUNY stiffes retirees



Dave Sanders

Retirees blasted the CUNY administration's inaction on pension update delays.

PSC Retiree Chapter Chair Bill Friedheim said in testimony to the BOT at the June hearing at Hostos Community College. "They have taught, inspired, counseled, ad-

vised and made a difference in the lives of what is arguably the most diverse student body in the United States. By my calculation, that is cumulatively thousands of years of

steadfast, hard work. Rather than gratitude from the university they served, they must wait – in some cases for years – to enjoy the fruits of a well-earned retirement."

"This year, after speaking to a number of very responsible and credible officials at the TRS, it has become crystal clear that the fault indeed lies with the City University of New York's administration," said retired Queens College history professor John O'Brien in his written testimony in June. "The TRS does not have the necessary salary data to make the changes in the pension amount for me and everyone else in my position. CUNY has failed to do this. This is not some bargaining chip in a contract negotiation. This is money legally owed to us. With this injustice unresolved and unattended to for this amount of time, who can and must do anything about this? You – [the CUNY BOT] – this is your job."

MEETING TRS

In early August, Friedheim, PSC Treasurer Sharon Persinger and PSC staff met with TRS representatives and learned that TRS had finally received sufficiently accu-

rate payroll data on retired full-time CUNY instructional staff members that updated benefit amounts will begin to be paid this fall, starting with 37 full-time senior college retirees in September. Most of the rest of the full-time retirees should see increased benefit amounts in October and November.

MATH MATTERS

"At the meeting with TRS, we learned how important accurate, detailed data are for the analysts to determine the correct benefit amounts," said Persinger. "Also, some retirees apparently still owe the pension system some modest deduction amounts, because deductions were not calculated properly when retro pay was paid. For example, someone who had worked for 10 years as of January 2017 was eligible to have no further pension deduction taken at that point, but may owe deductions on the increased pay from several prior years before they hit the 10-year mark."

Employees who still owe TRS deductions (about 35 of them) will be

Continued on page 10

Some progress is being made on updates

New chairs for HEOs, campuses and RF

By ARI PAUL and SHOMIAL AHMAD

When Kathleen Offenholley taught at Brookdale Community College in New Jersey, her union chapter leader encouraged her to get more involved with the union. While she considered herself to be very pro-labor, Offenholley felt she couldn't contribute her time and energy, because she had a 5-year-old son and little spare time. Maybe when he was older she could get more involved, she told her chapter leader.

With her son now graduating from college, Offenholley, a professor of mathematics at Borough of Manhattan Community College and the outgoing vice chair of the PSC campus chapter, is taking the next step. She was recently elected the new chapter chair in the PSC's Spring elections, taking over for outgoing chair Geoff Kurtz.

"I'm really passionate about justice for adjuncts, so I want to keep working on that," she said, adding she wants to continue the chapter's practice of including College Laboratory Technicians and Higher Education Officers in labor-management meetings. In addition to Offenholley, several new chapter chairs, including two for the newly formed chapters representing CUNY Research Foundation (RF) units, won seats in the recent elections.

LOCAL ISSUES

Locally, Offenholley said, "We've been looking at reassigned time for coordinators of programs because sometimes they get that time and sometimes they don't get it. It's really not very systematic and our president has told us that she doesn't want to give more reassigned time. For some people it's a huge extra workload."

Cynthia Bink, the director of counseling services at City Tech, is the new HEO chapter chair (the previous chapter chair, Andrea Vásquez, remains the union's first vice president). An activist with the chapter since she started at City Tech, she got her start in academic unionism at Passaic County Community College in New Jersey.

"I saw by organizing we could create change," she said, recalling how administrative workers fought back against the threat of termination without due process through on-campus demonstrations and strong bargaining. "We would all wear black and walk around the building" after several workers were suddenly fired, she said. "After a while, we won a raise and more job security."

Since coming to City Tech 15 years ago, Bink has experienced the problems HEOs and other members face throughout CUNY. She has campaigned for the administration to address a mold problem in one of the college's main buildings, where the problem has not been fully solved and some workers are still reporting health problems. Bink added that incumbent HEOs are not getting reclassified, caus-

Spring chapter election results



HEO Chapter Chair Cynthia Bink, right, discusses staff issues with local chapter members at her home campus, City Tech.

ing HEOs to be both overworked and denied avenues for more pay. Lack of reclassification and having few differential requests approved, Bink said, are some of the biggest issues for HEOs throughout CUNY right now.

Stepping into the HEO chapter chair role is a big deal, she said. She will be addressing issues in all five boroughs, not just at one campus. "I'm curious about what's going on at the other campuses," Bink said. "I hope I can listen more. People need to be heard more than anything. I need to go out there and talk to more than the people who go to the Delegate Assembly."

But she is confident she can step into the job. "HEOs have organizing in their blood," Bink said, joking that in addition to counseling students in her City Tech job she'll also be counseling her fellow union members as chapter chair. "We run events and programs. We offer something to the union."

TRANSPARENCY

Scott Cally, an assistant professor of theater arts at Kingsborough Community College, is the new chapter chair for the South Brooklyn two-year campus chapter. Cally, a theatrical lighting designer by trade, was elected in a contested election, replacing Rina Yarmish, who served in the position for two decades.

"I started being active with PSC because I was a grievant and the union saved my job," said Cally, who began at Kingsborough 13 years ago.

On the local front, he said he wants the chapter to focus on increasing administrative transparency and addressing the declining enrollment on campus (see *Clarion's* story on the campus's enrollment crisis in the December 2018 issue).

"There are large questions about what decision-making is happening on campus," Cally said. "What is being done about the enrollment? Our facilities are deteriorating at an alarming rate – pipes burst and the heating and air conditioning often aren't functioning. We've had a lot of encouraging words from the administration, but we're really going to be demanding to see some results."

More generally, Cally, who is also a member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA 829 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, said that he believed that after the next contract is settled, the union can begin discussions about equity for community college faculty.

Cristina Moore was elected the chair of the Hunter College Campus Schools Chapter. She told *Clarion* she had served as vice chair but decided to step up into the chapter chair role in order to better serve the membership after the previous chair retired.

"We are a high school and elementary school in one building and there seems to be some inequities among the schools that I have been trying to rectify," Moore said. "We also got the wrong amount of back pay, which we fixed and the employees have all been paid accurately."

The Spring elections also yielded two new union leaders for the PSC's small but important private-sector membership. The members in PSC's Research Foundation chapters see the importance of staying organized beyond getting together when it is time to negotiate a contract. For several years, the chapters functioned without formal representation in the PSC's Delegate Assembly – but not anymore.

"I just want to see us...use the

power of the union to improve the lives of people here," said Charles Chaung, the newly elected chapter chair of the RF Central Chapter. Chaung was a part of the bargaining committee that negotiated the RF Central's last contract. When it was time to elect a leader, he was ready. "I figured that I could step up and do that," Chaung said.

For Antonica James, the recently elected chair of the Research Foundation Field Unit Chapter, the power of the union comes from unity. She was surprised when she found out that there was no leadership in the unit. For her, the granddaughter of a Teamsters shop steward, becoming a chapter chair was a no-brainer.

"This is a big deal. This is important," James told *Clarion*. "We weren't organized and we should be. And we can be."

RF workers in the PSC bargain separate contracts from the PSC-CUNY contract since the Research Foundation is a private nonprofit employer. Both units, the RF Central and the RF Field Unit chapters, have time to organize before their next round of bargaining. RF Central's contracts expire at the end of 2022; the RF Field Unit Contract expires in the summer of 2021.

A senior business systems analyst, Chaung sees his new role as identifying members' issues and ensuring that the workplace is equitable. "It's also important," he said, "to ensure that the contract is being followed and to strategically frame the issues in order to get the most traction from management when in contract bargaining."

James, a retention and engagement specialist at City Tech, is fo-

cused on building her chapter across the three campuses it covers: City Tech, LaGuardia Community College and the Graduate Center. She said she knows her issues and the issues at her campus, but she needs to identify other members' issues that aren't similarly situated. For her, building the RF Field Unit Chapter means doing mundane but important tasks: setting up the structure of regular meetings, mobilizing around workplace issues and ensuring that she and her colleagues have a face and a voice within the PSC.

"I hope to see our membership grow and have people take on what we're doing," James said. "I want to see members be proud to be a part of this chapter."

THREE-YEAR TERMS

The newly elected leaders will serve three-year terms. Half of the PSC chapters held elections for local leaders this year; the other half will vote in spring of 2020. Union-wide elections for officers and the Executive Council took place last year and will be held again in the spring of 2021. Both local officers and union-wide officers serve three-year terms.

Complete results of all the chapter officers elected last month are on the PSC website.

BOROUGH OF MANHATTAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Chair, Kathleen Offenholley; Vice Chair, Robin Isserles; Secretary, Anthony Creaco; Officers-at-Large, Yakov Genis, Yolanda Medina, Charles Post, George Stevenson; Delegates to the DA, Anthony Creaco, Angeles Donoso Macaya, Erik E. Freas, Deborah Gambis, Anthony Gronowicz, James Hoff, Craig Hutchinson, Robin Isserles, Andrew Levy, Hemalatha Navaratne, Owen Roberts, Sharell Walker, Brianne Waychoff; Alternates to the DA, David Allen, Heather James, Ines Carrera Junco, Andrew Smallwood, Rebecca Smart, Michelle Wang; Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Hyacinth Martin, Wambui Mbugua

BROOKLYN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER: Chair, Felicia Wharton; Vice Chair, Angel Calderon; Secretary, Irene Dascher

COLLEGE OF STATEN ISLAND: Chair, George Sanchez; Vice Chair, John Lawrence; Secretary, Peter Galati; Officers-at-Large, Jillian Baez, Carol DeMeo, Catherine Lavender, Susan Mee-Crimmins; Delegates to the DA, Cesar Arenas-Mena, Michael Batson, Jonathan Cope, Cary Karacas, John Lawrence, Ruth P. Silverberg, Nelly Tournaki; Alternates to the DA, Valerie Forrestal, Maureen Garvey, Christina M. Hagedorn, Halil Ege Ozen, Chang-Hut Shen; Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Philippe Marius, Donna Scimeca

HIGHER EDUCATION OFFICERS: Chair, Cynthia Bink; Vice Chair, Janet Winter; Officers-at-Large, Angela Eustace, Zoraida Hernandez, Sara Mazes; Delegates to the DA, Anthony Andrews, Jeffrey Ballerini,

Continued on page 7

Union organizes new members in August, Sept.

By CLARION STAFF

When the Supreme Court ruled in June 2018 in *Janus v. AFSCME* that unions like the PSC could no longer collect agency shop fees from non-members, the union faced a new reality: throughout the year, organizers and campus leaders would need to reach out to newly hired faculty and staff and ask them to sign union cards.

It's common for campuses to hire throughout the year, especially in staff positions, but the beginning of a semester is the busiest time when the union is setting up orientations and reaching newly hired faculty and staff.

BIG DAY AT GC

Union organizers and activists are happy to report that enthusiasm at the beginning of the Fall 2019 semester is high. The Graduate Center chapter, for example, reported that it had signed up nearly 150 new members in August.

This good news is the result of organizing that began before the Supreme Court handed down its ruling. In anticipation of the ruling, the PSC created teams of member-organizers who are tracking down non-members on their campuses to have one-on-one conversations about joining the PSC. In a presentation to the union's Delegate Assembly meeting, First Vice President Andrea Vásquez noted that the union has signed up more than 800 new full-time members in the last year. "That's a huge accomplishment," Vásquez said.

Meeting new faculty and staff at CUNY

The new reality for unions



Dave Sanders

Chapters are signing up new members throughout the year.

But the work is constant: for example, at York College, before the court decision was handed down the chapter reached a 100 percent full-time membership rate, then dropped down to 98 percent this academic year, but after chapter organizers reached out to the non-members, York College reached 100 percent membership again among full-timers. However, the membership rate across CUNY has declined among part-timers from 63 percent to 60 percent, even though the number of unionized part-timers has gone up in the last year from 9,672 to 9,798, because the total number of adjuncts has increased dramatically. The union will need to have a more aggressive union outreach

campaign among the part-timers, especially new hires.

Clarion contacted some of the new members who signed union cards at the beginning of this semester. As always, newly hired faculty and staff can join the union by contacting their chapter chair or going online at <https://www.psc-cuny.org/join-psc>.

Caring for all

I didn't hesitate to sign up. I love unions. Everyone I know who is in a workplace that has a union is better able to bargain their wages or bargain time off. Everyone I know who isn't in a union, they just get abused by their employer because there is no one to turn to.

To me, being part of a union means caring about everyone – everyone who works with you and everyone who works in the same organization as you – and making sure that we all have the same rights. It's about speaking up for other people. If they don't know that their rights are being trampled on, they won't say anything. But if we are all in the union, we can all go to a meeting to know our rights.

Now is a very important time for new members to get involved, during contract negotiations and the \$7K for adjuncts campaign. It's important to keep up the pressure. New students have to get just as involved as fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh-year students to tell the Graduate Center that it's not just a fluke that a lot of people join the union one year. It's a culture of being collective and making sure that all of us are taken care of.

Inayah Entzminger
Graduate Assistant, Biochemistry
Graduate Center

Union family

I started working at Hostos at the end of July, and I signed up for the PSC in August. I'm a very fast-paced person. I don't like to kill any time.

I have nothing to worry about in terms of walking a straight line, but there could come a time when part of the job doesn't go right for you. I feel like being in the union is a good protection. It can be on your side.

I'm a traditionalist. I have family members who were and are in the

union. My father was in the union. He was a butcher. My brother-in-law is an electrician and is a part of Local 3 [of the IBEW].

My father got hurt on the job, years back. He was forced to retire. Being a union member helped him in terms of retirement. He worked hard, has a nice life, and he got a good pension. I believe it's because he was part of the union. I hope for the same kind of future for myself.

Nicholas Valente
Financial Aid Specialist, ASAP
Hostos Community College

Red for higher ed

At all the previous colleges where I worked, there wasn't a union. The administration could decide whatever it wanted about faculty's working conditions, and the faculty themselves didn't have a say. Class sizes would go up constantly with little discussion. Salary increases could be frozen with no explanation.

At Queens College, no decision about pay, teaching evaluation and benefits can be taken without taking into account the union's perspective.

The current attack on organized labor across the US is a clear response to increased worker militancy in the last several years. Teachers' strikes are making headlines. Workers are rediscovering their power in these struggles. That scares the bosses. It's important for me to be a union member and participate in this struggle.

Oded Nir
Assistant Professor
Classical, Middle Eastern and
Asian Languages and Cultures
Queens College

Victory for multiyear adjunct appointments

By ARI PAUL

If an academic department wants to deny a multiyear appointment to an adjunct for budgetary reasons, the college has to do its homework first, an arbitrator has ruled.

The provision creating multiyear appointments for adjunct instructors in the contract settled in 2016 was heralded as a small step forward in creating job security for part-timers at CUNY. The union has now taken that win a step further: an arbitrator's decision issued on June 5 rules that CUNY cannot deny an adjunct a multiyear appointment arbitrarily and that if the administration is going to deny someone for budgetary or programmatic reasons, the college must conduct a comprehensive review of the budget or the programmatic basis.

This adds a new layer of protection for adjuncts seeking multiyear appointments, the union said in response to the ruling.

The case began in May of 2017,

Ruling supports PSC

when Jessica Nicoll, an adjunct lecturer in dance at Hunter College, was denied a three-year appointment despite the fact that she had met the college's requirements for such an appointment and received a recommendation from her department's personnel and budget committee. She also had a recommendation for an appointment from the interim dance department chair, Carol Dilley, who told Nicoll in a letter the previous month that the college "intends to reappoint you." The college then denied her the appointment on the grounds that the department was fairly new and was undergoing changes amid ongoing budget cuts at the college.

CHANGING THE STATUS QUO

The union filed a grievance and argued to Arbitrator James Darby that the appointment was unreasonably denied, rejecting the notion that a department's "state of

flux," as the administration put it, was a justifiable reason for the denial. The union also argued, as the decision states, that the collective bargaining agreement's inclusion of the multiyear appointments "intended to change the status quo, which gave the college unfettered discretion to deny appointments."

Darby sided with the PSC in his decision. "To be sure, the [Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)] does not obligate the college to approve all three-year adjunct appointments," he said. "However, the MOA clearly and unambiguously altered the status quo of colleges having absolute discretion with regards to adjunct appointment determinations. With respect to the three-year adjunct appointment, the parties agreed to multiple prerequisites, including service requirements and positive recommendations 'based upon a

comprehensive review of the adjunct's performance and the fiscal programmatic needs of the department and/or college."

In a stinging rejection of the CUNY administration's case, Darby said that Hunter College's acting provost and vice president of academic affairs, Lon Kaufman, could not provide a budgetary or programmatic basis for denying the appointment.

Dr. Kaufman stated he did not know whether the Board of Trustees evaluated the viability of the dance program when it decided to elevate it to a stand-alone department in November 2015. He also testified that he did not look at the specific courses the grievant taught or the department's curriculum before he denied the grievant's reappointment.

Darby noted that Nicoll met all of the service requirements put forth by her department's chair and that she received "positive af-

firmation" from her colleagues. He said, "The record is devoid of any analysis being done by the college of the dance department's program or curriculum justifying the denial of the grievant's three-year appointment."

The decision remands the case to a select faculty committee to handle Nicoll's appointment in accordance with the contract.

A BLOW TO ADMIN

For the PSC, this is not just a victory for one adjunct, but builds arbitral precedent to strengthen the contractual provisions for adjunct multiyear appointments by stating that the decision to deny an appointment cannot be arbitrary. The arbitration comes after the union boasted won two settlements enacted this spring; one to expand three-year appointment eligibility to adjuncts who have additional workload credit for "jumbo" classes, and one for those who teach in programs with links to an academic department.

Adding to a major win in the last contract

FT faculty disparity between CUNY, SUNY

By ARI PAUL

For the past two decades, the average number of full-time faculty members per student at SUNY has increased while it has steadily decreased at CUNY, a new CUNY University Faculty Senate study shows. However, faculty-student ratios vary dramatically from one campus to another within each system.

The findings, released in May by the senate's Budget Advisory Committee, highlight the disparate states of the two systems — one, SUNY, being mostly located throughout the state and serving middle-class students while the other, CUNY, is an urban university serving mostly the working class and communities of color.

THE COLD NUMBERS

In 2003, the report said, both SUNY and CUNY maintained 43 full-time faculty members per 1,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students. By 2017 that number at SUNY slightly increased to 45, while at CUNY it dipped to 35. The study excludes two-year campuses, which in New York City are funded by the city rather than the state, and specialized graduate schools.

"The difference in full-time faculty access for senior college students is important," the report said. "For example, assuming a hypothetical campus of 10,000 full-time equivalent students at the fall 2017 rates, a SUNY campus would have 450 full-

Must address funding



Student Senate legislative chair Smitha Varghese: CUNY being 'short changed.'

time faculty members and a CUNY campus would have 350, a difference of 100 faculty members. Adding 100 faculty members to a 10,000 FTE CUNY campus would yield 600 additional course sections taught by full-time faculty members who are available on a full-time basis for student advising and mentoring, office-hour assistance with coursework and engagement with students in research and student service activities."

It continued, "Overall, to bring all of the CUNY senior college campuses up to the SUNY average of 45 faculty members per 1,000 full-time

equivalent students would require 1,299 additional faculty members."

The disparity is also highly racialized, the report noted. In 2017, between both SUNY and CUNY, there were 42.4 full-time faculty per 1,000 FTE students among white students, while that number was 37 for black students and 37.3 for Latinx students.

ENROLLMENT UP

Stephen Brier, a professor of urban education at the Graduate Center, echoed an explanation for the inequality in the faculty-to-student ratio made in the report. "CUNY's

enrollment has gone up and SUNY's has stayed fairly stable, and our full-time faculty has not gone up with our enrollment," he told *Clarion*.

Because CUNY has more students who are eligible for TAP, it is disproportionately affected by the increasing "TAP gap" — the difference between the tuition assistance that the state provides and the actual tuition rate. That difference comes out of CUNY and SUNY's existing budget. This funding shortfall has made CUNY fall further behind in faculty hiring even as student enrollment has increased.

STATE OBLIGATION

For Brier, this inaction marks a betrayal of an unstated understanding that the state has an obligation to treat the two university systems equally. "Our two systems should be funded in lockstep. That's been the operating procedure since 1979, since the state took over the senior colleges."

Smitha Varghese, the legislative chair of the University Student Senate and a senior majoring in psychology at Queens College, told *Clarion* that while both systems deserve adequate funding, it is CUNY that "has been shortchanged for years."

"It's just been frustrating to see that the system with fewer students of color gets more resources allocated to them," she said.

This is the case at both SUNY and CUNY campuses. Indeed, the report recommends addressing the

inequality by increasing funding at all CUNY and SUNY campuses that are below the prevailing SUNY ratio of 45 faculty per 1,000 FTE students.

"The new faculty positions should be funded over a period of several years to permit orderly recruiting and faculty development," the report said. "The funding should be accompanied by funds to close the TAP Gap, which erodes campus capacity to fund faculty lines. The funds should be allocated to SUNY and CUNY to their senior colleges based on policies that also address disparity between their senior colleges considering overall enrollments, levels of instruction and also with respect to race and ethnicity."

The report also supports a long-standing PSC demand for recruiting, hiring and retention practices that will achieve a more diverse faculty,

A racial inequality between CUNY and SUNY?

including career opportunities for part-time faculty. PSC has fought during each legislative session to pressure lawmakers into ending the decades-long underfunding of CUNY and to increase state aid to CUNY.

Brier noted that making that change happen is going to require an existential change in thinking in Albany, where funding for public higher education would be given the same amount of focus and attention as hot-button items like K-12 education.

"We're not on the list of legislative priorities," he said of CUNY. "It's a disappointment."

New chairs for HEOs, campuses and RF

Continued from page 5

Lawrence Bosket, Rachel Brown, Arthur Ben Chitty, Iris Delutro, Zee Dempster, Myrlene Dieudonne, Victoria Dolan, Marva Frederick, Renee Freeman-Butler, John Gallagher, Rulisa Galloway-Perry, Jennifer Harrington, Sharon Hawkins, Justyna Jagielnicka, Vanessa Jennings, Karlene Johnson, Barbara Kopp, Jennifer Lee, Isela Lopez, Pedro Luna, Philippe Marius, Graciano Matos, C. Mark Miller, Darryl Minor, Chastity Norman, Keith Okrosy, Victoria O'Shea, Geniece Pacifici-Elejalde, Gogie Padilla, Maria Patestas, Jesus Perez, Daliz Perez-Cabezas, Marcus Richardson, Anita Rivers, Alexander Romeo, Samina Shahidi, Michele Stewart, Andrea Vásquez, Kathryn Wayler, Janet Winter, Diana Zechowski; Alternates to the DA, Shakia Brown, Andrea Garnett-Lovell, Karen Johnson, Maureen LaMar, Mary Murphy, Anthony Parrella, Peter Santiago, Billy Wang

Hunter Campus Schools: Chair, Cristina Moore; Vice Chair, Irving Kagan; Secretary, Kelly McDougall; Officers-at-Large, Philip Frankel, Barbara Ghnassia, Sylvia Schaindlin, Lee Weinberg; Alternate to the DA, Sonya Glasser

JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (SPECIAL ELECTION): Alternates to the DA: Sami Disu, Jayne Mooney, Sandra Swenson

KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Chair, Scott Calley; Vice Chair, Christopher Chapman; Secretary, Mary Dawson; Officers-at-Large, Gregory Aizin, Donald Hume, Mohamed Lakrim, William Rooney; Delegates to the DA, Vincent Cuccia, Morris Didia, Maureen Fadema, Maria Hernandez, Tanya Johnson, Rick Repetti, Rina Yarmish; Alternates to the DA, Tamara Bellomo, Tian Cai, Susan Ednie, Ayalur Krishnan, Michael Rosson; Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Yves Etienne, Thomas Mintz

LEHMAN COLLEGE: Chair, Robert Farrell; Vice Chair, Mary Frances Phillips; Secretary, Ayanna Alexander-Street; Officers-at-Large, Eleanor T. Campbell, Joseph Fera, David Hyman, Wingyun Mak; Delegates to the DA, Ayanna Alexander-Street, Diane Auslander, Eleanor T. Campbell, David Manier, Abigail Mellen, Mary Frances Phillips, Ruth Wangerin; Alternates to the DA, Thomas Conroy, Humberto Lizardi, Nara Roberta Molla da Silva, Sarah Soanirina Ohmer, Jennifer Poggiali; Welfare Fund Advisory Council,

Dana Fenton

MANHATTAN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY CENTER: Chair, Karen Berry; Vice Chair, Samuel Paul; Secretary, Jacqueline Andrews; Officers-at-Large, Catherine Nelson, Lawrence Williams; Alternate to the DA, Latoya Cameron

MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE: Chair, Clinton Crawford; Vice Chair, Shirley Daniels; Secretary, Verna Green; Delegates to the DA, Janice Bloomfield-Alves, David Hatchett, Yvonne Joseph; Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Kamau Chow-Tai, James Gaynor

NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY: Chair, Benjamin Shepard; Vice Chair, Carole Harris; Officer-at-Large, Kyle Cuordileone; Delegates to the DA, Nora Almeida, Meghan Behrent, Sandra Cheng, Andrew Douglas, Reneta Lansiquot-Panagiotakis, Angela Loguercio, Sean MacDonald, Annie Ngana-Mundeke, Konstantinos Panayotakis, Patricia Rudden, Shauna Vey; Alternates to the DA, Gwen Cohen Brown, Sarah Ann Standing, Mark Noonan, Christopher Swift

QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Chair, Edmund Clingan; Vice Chair, Julian Stark; Secretary, Mike Cesarano; Officers-at-Large, Linda Hart, Susan Jacobowitz, Phil Pecorino, Clara Wajngurt; Delegates



Antonica James now leads the RF Field Unit chapter.

to the DA, Clarence J. Hall Jr., Daniel Mann, Hayes Mauro, Wally Rosenthal, Julian Stark, Joseph Vallone; Alternate to the DA, Susan Jacobowitz; Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Clara Wajngurt

RESEARCH FOUNDATION CENTRAL OFFICE: Chair, Charles Chaung; Vice Chair, Evan Michelin

RESEARCH FOUNDATION FIELD UNITS: Chair, Antonica James; Vice Chair, Lori Rothstein

RETIRES: Chair, William Fried-

heim; Vice Chair, Robert Nelson; Secretary, Marva Lilly; Officers-at-Large, Michael Frank, Constance Gemson, Doris Hart, Lawrence Rushing; Delegates to the DA, Robert Cermele, Jacqueline DiSalvo, Glenn Kissack, Cecelia McCall, Eileen Moran, Bonnie Nelson; Alternates to the DA, Anne Friedman, Mark Goldberg, Raymond Hoobler, David Kotelchuck, Marcia Newfield; Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Irwin Yellowitz

Five Questions for María Pérez y González

By CLARION STAFF

María Pérez y González, chair of Brooklyn College's department of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies (PRLS), cares deeply about a subject that does not get enough attention: faculty governance. She served on the college's faculty steering committee from 2003-2017 and as chair from 2009-2012, the first Latinx person to do so. From her vantage point, attacks on faculty's ability to govern on campus undercut efforts to create a diverse and multicultural campus. Academically, she's known for her 1993 study, "Latinas in Ministry: A Pioneering Study on Women Ministers, Educators, and Students of Theology."

As part of a series of interviews with PSC activists, *Clarion* asked her about her passion for faculty governance, what Puerto Rico can teach New York and how her early religious upbringing shaped her scholarship.

Clarion: You have been very committed to faculty governance. How do you think the underfunding of CUNY has affected that?

Pérez y González: Faculty governance is part of the fabric that keeps a university system true to its mission because faculty have direct contact with students as the facilitators of knowledge with a wealth of experience. For example, PRLS faculty serve to inspire and guide students from all walks of life to understand and analyze the world around them from an inter- and multidisciplinary perspective.

CUNY's underfunding has played a critical role in how we can fulfill our mission as the best, largest public urban institution of higher education – one that provides an affordable education for the masses, particularly the traditionally underrepresented groups in the United States, including immigrants. Inadequate funding means full-time, tenure-track faculty lines are not being filled, which means that students will have numerous part-time instructors (I began as an adjunct in the Spring of 1992), who are highly qualified but severely underpaid and who do not have to fulfill the duties of advisement, office hours,

An advocate for faculty governance



María Pérez y González: Lack of adequate state funding for CUNY hurts faculty governance.

writing recommendation letters and the like, although many adjunct faculty perform these functions because they want to serve students.

LACK OF FUNDING

My department has suffered tremendously from inadequate funding and doublespeak regarding the significance of diversity; ethnic studies departments across CUNY are in a similar situation. Since 2013 PRLS has had between three and four tenured/tenure-track faculty (sometimes two due to fellowships, new faculty reassigned time and sabbaticals), and the Provost's Office has failed to retain a faculty member or to replace a position to keep us whole as a department able to staff its own committees, particularly the Appointments/P&B Committee.

Since 2005 PRLS has borrowed up to three external faculty members to help make key decisions regarding tenure, promotion and adjunct hiring. Extra-departmental faculty

making critical decisions impacts the autonomy of PRLS.

While diversity is touted as a key component of the University, when it comes time to put our money where our mouth is and demonstrate true commitment, the lack of funding becomes the excuse. This is just one example among many.

How do you think the union can advocate for more faculty governance?

The union can continue to pressure New York State for more CUNY funding at all levels, particularly tenure-track faculty lines, and continue to follow up on cases where faculty governance has not been honored (bylaws, documents, protocol, curriculum, faculty decision-making bodies, etc.).

The union has been successful in many key areas for faculty, particularly regarding new faculty reassigned time, parental leave, summer chairing, etc. I hope it continues to

push for a higher adjunct pay rate, such as \$7K per course.

Puerto Rico has been having an austerity crisis, too. What can New Yorkers learn from Puerto Rico about austerity?

Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States with no equal partnership or voting representatives in Congress. While New York State is relatively free to trade beyond its borders, Puerto Rico does not have that power. All major entities and governing bodies have been and continue to be controlled by the United States.

At the moment, the Fiscal Control Board imposed by PROMESA (the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act) of 2016 consists of seven members appointed by the United States to determine the future of Puerto Rico and its US citizens and is not subject to Puerto Rico's governing bodies.

What is relatable to New York State are the matters of fiscal accountability and transparency coupled with ethics. Governor Andrew Cuomo pushed for, then suspended, the Moreland Commission to fight public corruption.

MONEY TO SPARE

While JCOPE (Joint Commission on Public Ethics) is in effect, and we as chairpersons and faculty earning over a certain salary have to comply with it annually, there are different rules for lawmakers who deal with almost \$200 billion of our monies. We need to hold all of our public servants accountable, especially our politicians.

New York State has budgetary excess, yet our lawmakers refuse to adequately fund CUNY, the one

major institution that is a true investment in our own future continually providing returns. A budget is a moral compass; investing in our young is absolutely essential.

Your scholarship focuses on Latina ministers. What drew you to that?

I grew up as a fourth-generation Pentecostal; I was the first born in the United States from my nuclear Puerto Rican family. I was surrounded by many women of faith who played key roles in the church, yet there was the glass ceiling that kept them from becoming a pastor. Being raised in the church was pivotal for where I am today and my profession as an academic.

Aside from keeping me occupied with multiple activities during the week and constantly encouraging good decision-making, there was an emphasis on studying and memorization of scripture. All of this helped form my sense of social justice, serving and educating with integrity.

Latinxs, like many groups, have been facing a lot of hostility from varying political groups in the past several years (such as calls to build a wall on the border with Mexico). What do you think Latinx Studies departments like your own can do to educate the public? Latinx Studies departments, as well as ethnic studies of varying kinds, women and gender studies, American studies and the like are invaluable and absolutely necessary in the United States. It

was birthed by students at a very difficult time during the civil rights movements and is even more significant today when the United States is more diverse than ever in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, language, immigration and gender.

If we as a nation had embraced our history rather than whitewashing it and making peoples invisible in our textbooks and our forms of communication, including the indigenous – Spanish was spoken here before English, and Mexicans did not originally cross the border but rather it was the United States that usurped the Southwest when it was Mexico – there would be a more informed and well-rounded sense of who we were, have been, are and are becoming.

I hope that perhaps with Chancellor Félix Matos-Rodríguez at the helm of CUNY, given his background as a Puerto Rican Studies historian, Latinx Studies departments and programs will be prioritized as part of his diversity agenda, supporting Latinx Studies faculty and curriculum (including the aforementioned areas of study) to be able to make critical, much-needed changes so that students who earn a CUNY degree are among the top in our nation when it comes to being equipped to deal with peoples across the globe and in their own neighborhoods.

York chief leaves

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

York College President Marcia V. Keizs stepped down from her post at the end of August, making her the fourth president of a CUNY college in Queens to leave her post in the past year. Keizs, who initially came to CUNY nearly 50 years ago, will return to the classroom, teaching at Bronx Community College (BCC).

"When I took the helm at York College, my vision was framed by

the values and ideals that inspired and fueled efforts of our founders," Keizs said in a statement.

DID HER BEST

Scott Sheidlower, PSC chapter chair at York said Keizs took the initiative to establish regular meetings with union members.

"She's been receptive to working with every union on campus," said Sheidlower. "She couldn't do everything because of money constraints, but she did her best."

Keizs served as president of the Jamaica, Queens, campus for 14 years. Beginning at CUNY in 1971 as an assistant professor of English at Queensborough College, Keizs has worked at five CUNY colleges and at the CUNY Central Office both as a faculty member and as an administrator.

Berenecia Johnson Eanes, who served as vice president for the Division of Student Affairs at California State University, Fullerton, is now the college's interim president.

Sheidlower said that he plans to sign Keizs up as a PSC member now that she has started as a BCC instructor.

Dept. chairs crushed by austerity: PSC report

By ARI PAUL

The past decade of austerity at CUNY has made the job of department chairs increasingly difficult – and these faculty leaders describe being overworked, overmanaged and underresourced in a union report released in June.

The report, based on interviews with 136 current and former department chairs around the university between February 2016 and July 2017, found several factors that imposed hardships on department chairs: “the exponential expansion of the department chair workload, particularly of clerical and administrative work; the impact of freezes or deferments of full-time faculty hiring; insufficient compensation in both time and money; inadequate administrative support and resources; the effect on department functions of the shortage of full-time faculty and over-reliance on adjuncts... and the erosion of faculty governance in ways that undermine the chair’s authority to lead the department.”

‘DEVASTATING’

In presenting the report at the June 20 Delegate Assembly, PSC President Barbara Bowen said that the findings were a “particularly illustrative study of what all faculty experience.” She noted that it was no accident that the study came out just as contract talks with CUNY intensified. Among union demands on the bargaining table is a provision that department chairs receive additional support. Bowen said, “This study leverages support for the department chairs’ demand.”

In the interviews, chairs offered “devastating” assessments, as Bowen put it. “Chairs...stressed an ongoing ‘administrative creep,’ as deans and provosts push more of the work once done in their own or other administrative offices down to departments. As a result, chairs are expected to oversee the academic well-being of departments while simultaneously taking on the work that shrunken or shuttered administrative student support offices no longer provide.”

The workload has become especially onerous, department chairs said, as they are expected to “be available by email 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” and that “the abundance of clerical tasks erodes time for 1) mentoring, nurturing and developing junior and mid-career faculty; and 2) guiding curricular reform, pedagogical and scholarly innovation, and other changes to meet the needs of a

Union offers fixes

changing and complex teaching and learning environment.”

The report found that lack of adequate compensation was another significant problem.

“Colleagues elsewhere in the profession are shocked to learn about our workload,” one chair said in the report, “but they are even more shocked to learn about the chairs’ conditions of work, including the lack of compensation we receive throughout the nine-month contract period, as well as our summer pay, which is increasingly contingent upon our physical presence on campus no matter how much labor goes into chairing from home and elsewhere.”

Chairs also found that their pedagogical authority has been undermined by administrators who reject new courses not on pedagogical grounds but rather on financial ones. One chair observed, “Although I have served as chair for a long time, I will not put myself forward again for another term, and even wonder if I can stand fulfilling the obligations of this one, given the 24-7 nature of the job and lack of respect shown to department chairs by the dean, provost, president and CUNY Central.”

The report notes that because of decades of government underfunding, department chairs are often forced to deal with classrooms that are either too cold or too hot or don’t have enough space for classes to take place.

The report also noted that adjunctification of the professorate has had an effect on chairs’ roles.

LABOR IMBALANCE

The report said, “The growing imbalance between full-time and contingent labor has created more work for chairs because they increasingly must manage dozens of hourly employees – their hiring, course assignments, their classroom locations and work spaces, their pay, their teaching evaluations and observations – every semester. CUNY’s overreliance on part-time faculty to fill the gap left by underfunding often creates a revolving door of employees with no institutional memory and little or no time or expectation to perform departmental service. CUNY’s inadequate pay for adjuncts also makes recruitment and retention difficult and deeply undermines morale in the department as a whole.”

The dire situation for department

chairs affects not just faculty morale, but the quality of education. A key takeaway from the report is this: if educational leaders are overworked, overstressed and underresourced, the problems associated with austerity will inevitably undercut the quality of education for CUNY students.

PSC Secretary Nivedita Majumdar noted that it was important for CUNY administrators, especially the new chancellor, to listen to the voices of department chairs and look to make substantive fixes. “These voices,” Majumdar said of the department chairs’ interviews during the June Delegate Assembly, “are especially key.”

UNION SOLUTIONS

The report offers several solutions:

- “Compensation: To incentivize professors to take on the burden of chairing departments for the benefit of students, junior and mid-career faculty, and the larger institution, CUNY needs to compensate them properly, in time and money. A reasonable amount of compensation would be teaching no more

than one course per year and receiving at least a \$10,000 stipend while serving as chair. Such compensation would be commensurate with what chairs receive at comparable universities, including public universities.”

- “Reassigned time: Every college needs to have a documented, fair and equitable rationale for the reassigned time it currently provides to department and program chairs. The current allocation of reassigned time is too often arbitrary, inequitable and based upon questionable statistics. Consultation with departments and department chairs is needed to create a more equitable formula for reassigned time. The formula should take into account the size of departments and the support systems available to assist with daily, semester-long and year-long demands.”

- “Support staff: Every department needs support staff who have the talents, skills and training needed to meet the challenges of the position. Every department, regardless of size, should have at least one HEO who can help to lighten the administrative load of the department chair.”

- “Support for scholarship: Chairs have little or no time for scholarship, yet CUNY holds them accountable for scholarly production.

Consequently, many department chairs see the need for a cap on chair service unless conditions and supports for chairs change substantially. Some chairs recommend a limit on the number of terms or years a chair may serve. Given the current lack of institutional support, some chairs recommend that department chairs should not have to serve in the summer, allowing them time to do scholarly or creative work. In this case, colleges would have to pay summer deputies to do the work, compensating them properly and providing the training and authorizations they need. A better solution would be to compensate and support chairs fairly while also providing targeted support for their scholarly work.”

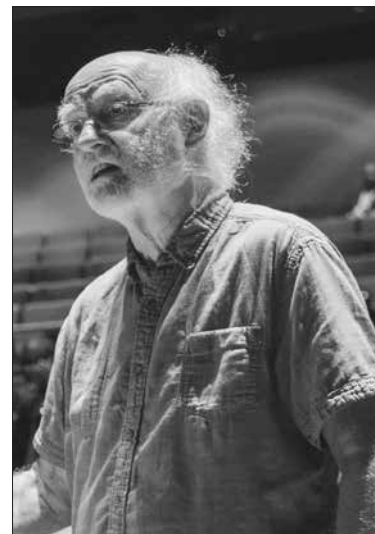
- “Seniority: No assistant professor should be pressured to serve as department chair and no associate professor should serve as a department chair until she or he has begun to meet the scholarly expectations required for promotion to full professor.”

- “Full-time faculty: To meet the educational mission of the University, CUNY needs to place more emphasis on hiring additional full-time faculty members and secure the resources to do so. Administrators, removed from the challenges of instruction and academic discipline, cannot substitute for chairs. CUNY Central needs to ensure that certain administrative work currently done by department chairs is returned to being the responsibility of deans and provosts, that student support service offices are properly staffed and that departments receive the support staff they need.”

- “Part-time faculty: CUNY needs to end its reliance on part-time faculty. Adjunct faculty now teach the majority of the University’s courses, a ratio that is a far cry from the goal once routinely included in CUNY Master Plans of 70 percent full-time faculty and 30 percent part-time faculty. The overreliance on adjuncts, coupled with exceptionally low adjunct pay, places special strain on department chairs. Until the ‘missing’ 4,000 full-time faculty positions are restored to CUNY, department chairs will continue to be structurally impeded in their responsibilities.”

HELP FROM NYSUT

The report was sponsored in part by a New York State United Teachers grant. Interviews were conducted by Jocelyn Wills, professor of history at Brooklyn College, and Michael Spear, assistant professor of history at Kingsborough Community College. The report was also fa-



Dave Sanders

Bill Friedheim, retiree chapter chair

New dues rates for retirees

By ARI PAUL

The union’s delegates unanimously passed a resolution on June 20 changing the retiree dues structure.

Delegates agreed to “a modest increase for retiree full-time members from \$71 to \$85, and for the first time created a dues option for retired adjuncts with an annual rate of \$40.

“Adjuncts who retire from CUNY are clearly in a separate category,” Bill Friedheim, the PSC retiree chapter chair, told *Clarion*. “Adjuncts, unlike other exploited full-time titles, don’t get health benefits when they retire, and most of them don’t have pensions.”

“The retirees chapter is very sensitive to the fact that we have not attracted many retired adjuncts to the chapter,” Friedheim told delegates. “We hope this will help.”

POLLING THE MEMBERS

As the text of the resolution explains, “the Executive Board of the PSC Retirees Chapter has had substantial discussions about raising the dues and has conducted an informal survey of members...83 percent of those who responded to the survey indicated they were in favor of a dues increase.”

The vote took place during a special Delegate Assembly separate from the regular Delegate Assembly scheduled in June, as per the union’s constitution. This will be the first change to the retirees dues structure in nearly 20 years. The new dues structure will go into effect September 2019.

cilitated by Michael Fabricant (PSC legislative chair), Nivedita Majumdar (PSC secretary), Francis Clark (PSC communications coordinator) and Deborah Bell (PSC executive director).

The full report can be viewed online at tinyurl.com/PSC-chair-report.

DC 37 workers get paid – finally

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The more than 10,000 CUNY workers covered by the white- and blue-collar contracts of District Council 37 and several other unions no longer have to guess when they will receive their contractual raises or their retroactive pay based on the contracts that were settled last year.

“After much pushing and pressuring management, we have confirmed CUNY pay dates,” said DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido in the *Chief-Leader*.

“We are working closely with [DC 37] to ensure that staff are paid what they are due in the near future,” a CUNY spokesperson told *Clarion*.

At CUNY’s senior colleges, full-time staff who are DC 37 members were paid on August 1 and college assistants will be paid on September 26. The pay date at CUNY community colleges was August 23, according to a CUNY senior administrator.

SETTLED PAY

CUNY’s failure to meet its simple and straightforward obligation to implement the contract has led to months of frustration for DC 37 and other union members eager to receive their fair pay. Worse, the delay in pay adjustments raised fears in the CUNY community that CUNY was simply unable to meet its basic financial obligations. (Meanwhile, PSC retirees have voiced outrage that CUNY has been unable to submit updated salary information to the Teachers’ Retirement System. See story

The contract was settled last year.

A long wait

on page 4.)

The white- and blue-collar contracts settled November 2019 and ratified overwhelmingly the following December specified that employees covered by these contracts were owed more than two years of retro pay.

CUNY cited unforeseen technical problems in its payroll records as the reason for the delay, according to a May post on the DC 37 blog. DC 37 officials who spoke to *Clarion*, however, did not know specifically what has taken CUNY payroll so long to meet its contractual obligations.

WORKERS IMPACTED

DC 37, one of the largest municipal unions in the city, is affiliated with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and represents college assistants, custodians, information technology workers and other CUNY staff. In addition to employees covered by DC 37 Locals

375, 384, 1407, 1597, 2054, 2627, 1797 and motor vehicle operators in Local 983, CUNY employees who are members of the New York State Nurses Association, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 306 and Service Employees International Union Local 300 are covered by the contracts, which won 8.24 percent raises over a 52-month period and retroactive pay starting in February 2017.

DC 37 leaders lashed out against the unexplained delays in payments dur-



DC 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido has blasted the pay delays.

ing a CUNY Board of Trustees hearing April 30 at LaGuardia Community College. Local 2627 President Laura Morand told the trustees at the hearing, “You have failed to keep up your end of the contract. Why must we wait so long to get what is agreed upon? Our members are suffering. One of my members is on the verge of being

evicted. She works very hard and has kept up her part of the bargain.”

In May, PSC delegates passed a resolution of solidarity with their DC 37 colleagues, calling on the CUNY Board of Trustees and Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez to commit immediate resources to resolving the issue.

DC 37’s Garrido, who has been a vocal supporter of PSC’s call for wage justice for all CUNY employees, including part-time faculty, used it in pressing CUNY to set pay dates.

Additional reporting contributed by Ari Paul.

Pressing TRS & CUNY

Continued from page 4

notified this fall with instructions on how to clear up the problem promptly.

Another persistent problem is that retroactive payroll data for retirees who worked as adjuncts, particularly those who worked at several different colleges, have not yet been fully reported to TRS. Therefore, TRS cannot yet project a date to pay increased benefits to those adjunct retirees. PSC will continue to monitor the status of payroll data and TRS’s payment projections for that group.

CUNY ‘FAILS’

Terrence Quinn, a retired associate professor of education leadership at Queens College, said, “When CUNY takes all these years to update its employee records and still submits inaccurate information to TRS, then any reasonable person with any common sense would conclude CUNY fails to pay attention to its most basic task of record-keeping, and fails to pay respect to its employees. You have failed the test

of effective management.”

Jane Mushabab, a retired professor of English at City Tech, added in her statement that it is “disrespectful and demeaning to have to ask over and over again for correct payments on my well-earned pension.”

“CUNY Payroll is a disaster area,” Friedheim said. “Management must held be accountable.”

DEDICATED STAFF

In the meantime PSC representatives argued strongly in the August meeting that there should be service representatives at TRS dedicated to CUNY employees/retirees because the issues they face are very different from other employees TRS serves, largely department of education teachers and administrators.

TRS managers expressed a desire to be responsive to CUNY instructional staff who are members of TRS and will be reviewing their procedures. The union and the Retirees Chapter will continue to monitor their efforts.

Union, students defend CLIP at Hostos

Continued from page 2

At Hostos, the administration had been silent about future funding, so two instructors were non-reappointed and one retired. At Queensborough Community College, where enrollment in CLIP is reportedly down, the program has identified funds to reappoint one of the three non-reappointed instructors for a year and another for a semester.

HOSTOS HAS A MISSION

CUNY Central claimed they did not cut funding for CLIP explicitly. However, there is no doubt that adjustments to community college budgets resulting from City PEG (Program to Eliminate the Gap) funding cuts to CUNY had an effect. CLIP exists at six of CUNY’s seven city-funded two-year colleges and at three of the senior colleges – York, City Tech, and College of Staten Island.

For CLIP instructors at Hostos, the irony is not lost on them that the campus was founded to be a resource, in particular, for students

from Spanish-speaking families. The college says on its website: “An integral part of fulfilling [Hostos’s] mission is to provide transitional language instruction for all English as a Second Language (ESL) learners along with Spanish/English bilingual education offerings to foster a multicultural environment for all students.”

For Gabriela Arcila, a CLIP instructor at Hostos since 1999, the threatened cuts, if not averted, would hit the school’s most vulnerable students. “Our students come from under-privileged backgrounds,” she said. “Many of our students are ill-prepared for college.”

CAN’T SERVE STUDENTS

CLIP instructors at Hostos noted that it appears that “the push is to cut the beginning ESL classes,” said Daniel Casey, a Hostos-based CLIP instructor. “We don’t know how we’re going to serve all the students. Cutting these low-level language classes is a really bad idea at two-year colleges because

they purport to be open-admissions campuses.”

Sandra Williams, a CLIP instructor at Hostos, is upset about what cuts could do to her program. “I love teaching at CLIP, I believe in what I do,” she said. “CLIP really works in helping students get better. It’s great to be a part of a program that helps people. It’s sad to lose quality professionals who care and do their work.”

THERE’S STILL HOPE

All hope is not lost. Members at other campuses were successful in encouraging their local administrations to not impose cuts to CLIP. But for many at Hostos, even the notion that such cuts would be on the table is considered an insult to the school’s social purpose given the ongoing vilification of immigrants by the Trump administration.

“It’s an affront to our immigrant students,” said Craig Bernardini, the PSC interim chapter chair at Hostos. “These are such wonderful teachers.”

Dave Sanders

POLITICS

Why VOTE-COPE matters

By GEOFFREY KURTZ

Between February and May of this year, a team of 10 PSC members at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) talked with scores of colleagues about VOTE-COPE, the PSC's political action arm. By the end of the semester, we had increased the number of VOTE-COPE contributors at BMCC by more than 50 percent and the total contributions BMCC faculty and staff members make to the political fund by more than 75 percent. We did this because political action is – has to be – a normal part of our union's life, and the voluntary contributions that fund our union's political action a normal part of PSC membership.

The contracts our union negotiates with management, the working conditions CUNY faculty and staff members face on our campuses, the living conditions our students return to when they leave campus – public policies and the allocation of public funds shape them all. That's why electoral involvement is just as vital for the PSC as collective bargaining or contract enforcement.

POLITICS MATTER

Engagement in electoral politics has brought important recent victories for our union and has opened the door for future changes. In the 2013 mayoral election, the PSC endorsed Bill de Blasio early and campaigned for him enthusiastically.



PSC members went to Albany for lobbying efforts earlier this year.

Our relationship with the new mayor led to 2014 policy changes that kept adjunct health insurance secure and the Welfare Fund fiscally viable. In 2018 PSC support for insurgent New York Senate candidates helped flip partisan control of the State Senate, allowing the passage of some good legislation and bringing a new group of CUNY champions to the Senate, an institu-

tion which has in the past been cool toward the PSC's goals.

Legislative change is a long game. Political relationships and political power are built over time. To build them, you need to plan ahead and that means knowing what resources you will have. The PSC's electoral fund is supported almost entirely by members' voluntary contributions to

VOTE-COPE – not by our regular membership dues. When a PSC member signs up for VOTE-COPE and chooses a per-paycheck contribution level, that financial commitment provides our union with predictable resources to plan strategies for the long term.

Even though VOTE-COPE is essential to the PSC's political power, not enough PSC members currently contribute. What we found at BMCC this spring is that although many longtime members had heard of VOTE-COPE, few understood its role and even fewer had ever been asked by a colleague, in person, if they would contribute. But in personal conversations, where questions can be answered and the urgency of political action can be conveyed, members were usually quick to sign up. New members often signed a VOTE-COPE card along with a union membership card, treating the two actions as one.

CENTRAL TO UNIONISM

Our BMCC team's work this spring convinced me that when we include a VOTE-COPE invitation as a regular part of conversations about PSC membership, members respond. Support for our union's political work isn't a special interest or something only for those who teach American government or watch MSNBC obsessively. It's fundamental. Throughout the PSC, we should treat VOTE-COPE as the essential piece of union membership that it is.

If you are a PSC member who does not yet contribute to VOTE-COPE, you can sign up at psc-cuny.org/cope.

Geoffrey Kurtz is an associate professor of political science at Borough of Manhattan Community College, where he recently completed a term as PSC chapter chair.

Flexing the union's political muscle

INTERNATIONAL

Sanctions: war by other means?

By RENATE BRIDENTHAL and IMMANUEL NESS

On May 1 the union's International Committee held a roundtable discussion on the question "Should an anti-war union oppose US sanctions?" In the midst of talk of war and aggression by the Trump administration, the question is as timely as ever for a progressive labor union like the PSC.

We ask this question because sanctions can kill as certainly as bombs, through hunger and displacement. With sanctions on Iran and Venezuela so closely linked to threats of war, sanctions and the dangers they pose to peace are currently preoccupying many people.

Sanctions may take the form of comprehensive boycott on a country or on targeted individuals or businesses in a country. The United States uses sanctions more than any other state and currently has over 20 states in its sights. The intention is to further US global hegemony by influencing the foreign and domestic policies of other nations. Our roundtable featured speakers on three of the most politically immediate ones.

Gregory Wilpert, author of *Changing Venezuela by Taking Power*, founder of venezuelanalysis.com, and managing editor of The Real News Network, addressed the effect of US sanctions on Venezuela from the first sanctions imposed by the Bush administration in 2006, which vetoed Venezuela's access to international loans, through Obama's 2015 declaration of Venezuela as a national security

threat to the United States, up to Trump's stopping all of the country's oil exports to the United States in 2019. In all, these led to a major decrease in oil production resulting in the loss of an estimated \$30 billion of revenue, hyperinflation and social effects such as the deterioration of the power grid, water supply, transportation and loss of food and medicine imports, resulting in an estimated 40,000 deaths (see: Mark Weisbrot & Jeffrey Sachs, "Economic Sanctions as Collective Punishment: The Case of Venezuela," The Center for Economic and Policy Research, April 2019).

CRISIS IN IRAN

Hamideh Sedghi, author of *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling and Reveiling*, provided historical background to current sanctions on Iran. An early US intervention followed the 1951 Iranian nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company by Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh. He was removed in 1953 by a CIA- and MI6-led coup that propped up the monarchical rule of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In 1979 a revolution against the shah and against American imperialism led to another attempted coup, which resulted in 52 American hostages being held for 444 days. Hostilities continue today around Iran's alleged nuclear capabilities, which Trump has again challenged. Professor Sedghi's analysis is that the United States protects Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE

and other proxies in the Middle East and its own imperialist interests from Iran in this protracted confrontation.

Reza Ghorashi, author of "The Effects of the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) on the Iranian Economy," detailed with PowerPoint charts and graphs how sanctions have weakened Iran. After Iran began to recover from Obama-imposed sanctions, the US Treasury Department imposed new ones in May 2018. Oil production and its attendant revenues decreased, resulting in a decline of food imports, inflation and hunger. Waivers were granted by the State Department to eight countries to continue purchasing oil from Iran, but those have now been lifted as the United States seeks to strangle the country's economy. Forcing countries who depend and rely on Iranian oil amounts to a secondary boycott on them should they continue to trade with Iran, which is considered illegal by international law by the United Nations Charter as a breach of national sovereignty – the *Guardian* extensively covered this subject in August of 2018.

Jeremy Kuzmarov, coauthor of *The Russians Are Coming, Again: The First Cold War as Tragedy, the Second as Farce*, analyzed the current demonization of Russia as an aspect of geopolitical rivalry since the Putin-led nationalist economic recovery of Russia after Yeltsin's US-sponsored "shock therapy" of privatization, which led to record poverty

and corruption levels. The Magnitsky Act of 2012 brought the first of 60 rounds of sanctions on Russian individuals and companies, based on still unproven grounds that Sergei Magnitsky, accountant for billionaire investor and tax-evader Bill Browder, had been murdered in prison ostensibly for whistleblowing on a government scam. In fact, Magnitsky was an employee of Browder, an investor now living in the UK, who pilfered more than \$4 billion in the Russian oil and gas industry after the fall of the Soviet Union. Browder has been convicted of tax evasion in Russia and has faced arrest by INTERPOL.

ON THE EASTERN FRONT

More sanctions followed the Ukrainian coup of 2014 that led to a pro-Russian separatist movement and to Crimea's vote to rejoin Russia, defined by the United States as aggression. Alleged Russian tampering with the 2016 US elections has increased bipartisan support for sanctions and the language of war. So far, sanctions have hurt but not severely damaged the Russian economy.

The audience discussion that followed these presentations was lively and seemed to strengthen the organizers' perception of sanctions as war as something to be opposed by an expressly anti-war union such as the PSC.

Renate Bridenthal is a professor emerita of history at Brooklyn College. Immanuel Ness is a professor of political science at Brooklyn College.

A panel with a full audience



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

AFT and student debt

The burden of student debt in America has become a major issue that has caught the attention of Democratic presidential candidates.

As the PSC's national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), put it recently, there are "45 million people carrying an average \$38,000 in debt."

The AFT is doing various things to help members deal with this problem, from running debt clinics to offering online relief resources and even taking legal action.

The PSC plans to hold a student debt clinic at the union hall this October. Watch the PSC website for information about how you can attend.

Professional Staff Congress/CUNY
61 Broadway, 15th Floor
New York, New York 10006
Return Service Requested

NonProfit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New York, N.Y.
Permit No. 8049

12

NEWS

Clarion | September 2019

The 'unpaid' work of adjuncting

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The union's "Log Your Hours" project for adjuncts allowed participants to draw a clear picture of how their work is valued. More than 275 CUNY adjuncts charted the time it took them to grade, plan lessons, teach and guide students using an online and mobile application that tracks time. The application shows how much time it takes for adjuncts to actually get the work done. And the numbers are alarming.

After crunching the data, more than two in five adjuncts discovered they are paid less than \$25 per hour. It is no secret that CUNY adjuncts are underpaid, but for many participants in the project, the ability to see their time delineated in hours and tasks was both revealing and depressing.

'UNPAID' HOURS

"While I was always aware of how much time I typically spend week to week on teaching-related activities, seeing it calculated and graphed into solid numbers gave me a much better sense of my actual 'unpaid' hours," said Nicole Butterfield, an adjunct assistant professor of anthropology at John Jay College and one of the adjuncts who participated in the project.

The project has been useful at the bargaining table, where the PSC's bargaining team is making the case for a transformational increase in adjunct pay from what is typically around \$3,500 per course.

"We need every tool to fight for equal pay for equal work, and loggers' records have helped to make adjunct labor more visible," said Carly Smith, PSC first vice president for part-timers and a PSC bargaining team member. "The project reinforced the value of our work as adjuncts and we know the power our labor gives us."

Adjuncts from every CUNY community and senior college and the Graduate Center participated in the logging project. For one month,

Logging the hours part-timers work



Jeff Couchman (right), an adjunct assistant professor at the College of Staten Island, who teaches screenwriting, participated in the project. 'I wanted the powers that be to see the numbers,' he said.

during the Spring semester, participating adjuncts tracked their time. The hours tracked did not include prep time before the beginning of the semester, midterm crunch or finals – points in the semester when significant additional planning and grading occurs.

"I wanted to see it myself and I wanted the powers that be to see the numbers," said Jeff Couchman, an adjunct assistant professor at the College of Staten Island who teaches screenwriting. Couchman found that he averaged 25 hours a week teaching one course. In order to develop students' writing, he gives them a

lot of one-on-one attention, which means a lot of reading, a lot of commenting and a lot of emailing students. Despite seeing the huge amount of work that he puts in, Couchman said he won't hold back. To develop students' writing it takes that much time and attention.

For adjuncts participating in the project, seeing the amount of time a task really takes was revealing. That email that they thought would only take five minutes took 15 in reality. Some said they began to limit tasks – answering emails only at specific times or grading for one

hour each day. One adjunct who had already streamlined tasks still found herself working nearly 3.5 hours for each hour in class. The boundaries and shortcuts helped, but they didn't solve the perennial CUNY problem of adjuncts feeling exploited.

'SUBSIDIZING' CUNY

Ruth Wangerin, who teaches anthropology at the College of Staten Island and Lehman College, became an adjunct after retiring from the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. With her pension and social security, along with her adjunct income, she can meet expenses and have one

modest vacation each year.

"My pension is subsidizing CUNY," Wangerin said. "I'm too old and too proud to be working for pennies, so I make sure that I limit how much work I'll do for the money, unlike many of my colleagues who are either less experienced or less secure than I am."

FINDING POWER

Daniel Mann, an adjunct lecturer at Queensborough Community College, said the project made him both feel powerless and recognize the power of being unified.

"Only if we are standing together can we accomplish anything," said Mann. A couple of semesters ago, he noticed many adjunct instructors were forced to approach their classes with an assembly-line mentality. Even with all of this streamlining, Mann said that he makes around \$15 an hour.

"I'm at the point now where I'm no longer willing to work for free," Mann said. "I'm not going to give CUNY any more of my time for free than I have to."

For Mann and the other adjuncts interviewed for this story, respect is paramount, and a decent wage is a sign of respect.

Mann is also an adjunct at Fordham, where he said he is treated better. He gets paid \$5,000 per course (it will incrementally go up to \$7,000, thanks to a recently settled union contract at that university), has an office and gets departmental support. In turn, Fordham students get more of Mann's time, which for Mann, who is the third generation in his family to be a part of the CUNY community, is unfortunate.

"I do believe in what CUNY is about," Mann told *Clarion*. "But CUNY needs to believe in itself and stop with this neoliberal corporatization."

Mann added that CUNY was not living up to its mission of public service. "The university is not a business, and that's what CUNY needs to realize," he said.

Dave Sanders

**Making
a case
at the
contract
talks**