

# Clarion

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



DECEMBER 2020



## PSC FIGHTS BACK

# RAISES DELAYED, MEMBERS ORGANIZE

CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, above, citing budget constraints, decided to delay the union's contractual raises in November. **PAGE 3**

## LEGISLATION



## New Deal for CUNY

Moving forward with bold legislation.

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## SERVICES

## Students need more mental health care

PSC members joined student activists to call on CUNY to increase the number of mental health counselors. CUNY, they said, is dangerously low on staff. **PAGE 4**



## ADJUNCTS

## Fighting back against the adjunct layoffs

At a tense City Council hearing, lawmakers and adjuncts confronted the CUNY administration's layoffs of thousands of adjunct workers this year. **PAGES 6-7**



## YEAR IN REVIEW

## The battle against COVID-19

Since March, the union has fought dozens of battles to protect members and students in the wake of the pandemic. *Clarion* looks back. **PAGES 8-12**

Erik McGregor

# Pushing Biden on higher ed

By ARI PAUL

President-elect Joseph Biden has already put forth some of his agenda for higher education, and media have focused on calls for the incoming president to cancel student debt as a response to the pandemic. Biden has not announced where he stands on canceling all student debt, but he has championed other student-centered proposals. He reportedly promised to double the top amount of Pell Grants, a move welcomed by NYPIRG Program Director Megan Ahearn, who said, “The current maximum Pell Grant covers the lowest share of four-year public college costs in more than 40 years.” Biden’s campaign promised to “[m]ake public colleges and universities tuition-free for all families with incomes below \$125,000” and to create “a new grant program to assist community colleges in improving their students’ success.” His higher education plan would offer “two years of community college without debt,” which he says “will immediately offer individuals a way to become work-ready with a two-year degree or an industry certification,” and his plan “will also halve their tuition costs for obtaining a four-year degree, by earning an associate’s degree and then transferring those credits to a four-year college or university.”

## MORE TO DO

All these ideas will work to make college more affordable. But does the Biden plan offer enough in terms of funding higher education? PSC President Barbara Bowen was among the higher education advocates who have presented ideas on the subject to the Biden transition team. Bowen focused on increased federal support for public colleges and universities and on ending the contingent labor system.

“Few issues during the campaign generated as much excitement as free college tuition and ending the massive nationwide student debt,” said Bowen. “To be close to seeing that become reality is huge. But if the new administration does not devote equal energy to ending the nationwide disinvestment in public colleges, it will be addressing half of the problem. The second half is investment in colleges themselves – and specifically, financial and regulatory incentives to end the atrocious system of contingent labor.” Bowen added that Biden ran in part on his strong support for labor and that he has a chance to think big: Ending the adjunct labor system by investing adequately in public colleges would be a landmark labor accomplishment as well as a transformative event for college workers and students.

Bowen has worked for several years with the American Federa-



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

# CUNY chutzpah

● The first Tuesday in December is often called “Giving Tuesday.” This year the chancellor asked CUNY workers to donate to CUNY. I received my undergraduate and one of my master’s degrees from CUNY. Usually, I am happy to donate to CUNY, but this year is different.

I am a proud member of the PSC. I worked very hard to help us get this current contract, in which we were scheduled to receive a 2% raise in November, but the chancellor at the start of November decided unilaterally to withhold this raise. Then he had the unmitigated gall, on Giving Tuesday, to ask us to make a donation to CUNY. By withholding my raise, he received, without my permission, money from me. Even if eventually he gives me back all the retroactive increase I am owed, he may have access to the interest which that raise generates.

The chancellor has not taken the multiple millions of dollars that this raise consists of and stuck it under his mattress. Presumably, he is spending it on CUNY. And then he comes along and requests that I give on Giving Tuesday to CUNY because they didn’t get any money

from me. That is the equivalent of a robber stealing from a store and later on contacting the store owner and requesting a loan or a gift of money because he is poor. The chancellor had the right to use impact bargaining to delay paying out that raise and maybe using a percentage or all of the interest for CUNY’s use [if it is negotiated]. Had he done that I would have agreed to make a donation to CUNY on Giving Tuesday.

Because he didn’t bargain with the union or even have the courtesy to send employees notice of his decision, I donated the same amount to all the CUNYs I am connected to. I donated \$0.00 to Hunter College, where I received my undergraduate degree; \$0.00 to Queens College, where I received my master’s in library science; and \$0.00 to York College, where I work. Maybe next year the chancellor will have made me whole and I will be able to donate to CUNY once again.

Scott Sheidlower  
York College

*Editor’s note: The writer is the PSC chapter chair at York. See more on this story on page 3.*

## Remote teaching blues

● The transition to remote learning in March 2020 created anxiety for students. I had installed an app for communication with students in case we moved online. The uncertainties surrounding the circumstances scared me as well, but with the help of close colleagues, we managed to move the courses to distance learning swiftly. It was “learn as you go” mode for a few weeks.

Recording live lectures and giving access to students helped them. Teaching math didn’t make things any easier. Mathematics anxiety is real. Compounded with a new modality of instruction (and in a way, a new reality), it created a new learning environment. Students realized that they needed to be self-driven to succeed. I found myself doing wellness check-ins with students on most days. Unfortunately, some students were coping with the loss of wages – others were coping with the loss of family members. Wellness check-ins became an integral part of my pedagogy. The situation required more flexibility than I usually provide, and four weeks after the transition,

I was happy to see that students had adapted well.

The semester did not pass without witnessing a sad story. Notably, a senior student, whom I had known since her first year at the college, had to drop out due to extenuating family circumstances, which particularly pained me.

I also taught Spring II, which is our summer session. The class capacity mirrored the face-to-face size and was manageable. Luckily, students knew what to expect in the virtual environment, and they hit the ground running on day one. Retention in my class was 100%. Students had, for the most part, adapted to the new modality of instruction and for math specifically; they enjoyed synchronous teaching. Mathematics anxiety in the distance-learning environment wasn’t completely gone, but several students managed to sail through it.

I do hope my campus continues to provide students with remote-learning devices and continues to give us manageable class sizes so we can continue to serve students as best we can. Currently, all my courses are at capacity, similar to the case of face-to-face courses from last fall. The class-size cap should remain intact to keep our momentum in retaining students. It takes more than teaching to keep our students engaged and motivated.

Reem Jaafar  
LaGuardia Community College

# Resisting cuts at CUNY



Students, faculty and staff protested cuts at Hunter College in October.

tion of Teachers (AFT), where she is a vice president, to develop proposals for increased federal funding for higher education to counteract the massive disinvestment by state governments. Unlike investment in K-12 education, federal funding for higher ed comes mainly in the form of direct grants to students, not as support for the colleges themselves. The AFT has called for a reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which would include the creation of “a new grant program to provide resources to public institutions that serve high numbers and percentages of Pell Grant-eligible students.” The program would be “similar to K-12 education’s Title I grant, which is designed to improve basic programs.” Biden has embraced this proposal.

## POLICY AGENDA

The Young Invincibles, an organization which, along with the PSC, is a member of CUNY Rising, published a policy paper laying

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# Members blast raise delay

By ARI PAUL

The CUNY administration has informed the union that it will delay across-the-board 2% raises to bargaining unit members. The raises are mandated by the contract to go into effect November 15. Make no mistake: This is a contract violation.

PSC isn't the first state union to face this problem – contractual raises due this April or later have been delayed for state-employee unions throughout New York State, with several unions, such as the Civil Service Employees Association and United University Professions at SUNY, experiencing multiple delays. These unions have not yet received their 2020 raises, union sources said. The PSC takes a principled stand: Even if the contract mandates a pay raise of just one cent, any delay in that payment is a breach of contract between the administration and the workers.

## TAX THE RICH

PSC President Barbara Bowen put the problem into context: Rather than raise taxes on the wealthy to fund state services and education, the state is opting to rob public servants of the wages they are contractually owed. In CUNY's case, the delay was ordered by the CUNY administration, not the governor, although it is in line with delays statewide. The delay at CUNY applies to employees on the city payroll, at community colleges, as well as state employees, at the senior colleges. There are small numbers of employees in other unions who were also due a November raise, and their raises have also been delayed.

"We're in the position of subsidizing the rich," Bowen said. "It's the money that we bargained for."

Governor Andrew Cuomo and CUNY Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez are sending a clear message: They are willing to violate the PSC's collective bargaining agreement and take money from workers' paychecks. CUNY officials asserted in a meeting with PSC leaders in early December that the decision to delay members' raises was part of an effort to manage the multimillion-dollar shortfall created by the governor's "withholding" of 20% of state funding for CUNY since June. Bowen said, "It's a political choice not to resist austerity and pass it on to us. We are lending money to CUNY, involuntarily."

On an annual basis, a decrease of 20% in state funding would amount to about \$230 million, CUNY officials said. By not paying PSC members' raises, CUNY is "saving" about \$3.66 million a month. But "saving" is the wrong term, Bowen said. Failing to honor the contract and implement a modest contractual increase costs CUNY faculty and staff at exactly the moment they may need the increase the most. "Our members have never worked harder for CUNY than in the past

## Admin violates contract



Dave Sanders

Nathan Schrader says the pay delays are hurting adjuncts and lowering morale.

nine months," said Bowen. "And how does CUNY repay us? By stiffing us of our raises."

Losing a 2% raise is not trivial, union leaders said. For a PSC member earning \$50,000 a year, the raise would amount to \$1,000 a year, or about \$83 a month. Many PSC members were counting on that money to pay overdue bills or help to support family members who have lost income during the pandemic.

## CUNY admin ruins the holidays.

CUNY officials told the PSC that the university intends to pay the full amounts owed retroactively, but they could not give an expected date. Nor could they give a date for implementation of the raise on an ongoing basis. When pressed by the union on whether members would receive interest on their involuntary loan to CUNY and New York State, the answer was no: The state and the city never pay interest on retroactive pay. The union has filed a class-action grievance about the contract violation.

## PAIN TO COME?

Some members fear that the pay delay indicates that retrenchment at CUNY is down the road. However, Bowen has told members that there have been no known talks within the administration about pursuing the kind of devastating cutbacks that took place at CUNY in the 1990s.

"People are very upset and angry," said Kathleen Offenholley, the PSC chapter chair at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. "Several faculty members noted that we have so many new administrators at BMCC – deans and vice presidents – and we don't even know what they actually do. Meanwhile, those of us actually teaching students are being told we are not valued."

Carol Huang, the PSC chapter chair at City College, said, "[The chancellor] signed the contract

and ate his own words. Live up to your promise."

James Davis, the PSC chapter chair at Brooklyn College, told *Clarion*, "Some people are budgeting around this 2% raise, and this is a real hardship. Others who may not feel it as forcefully still object to the principle of violating the collective bargaining agreement. And all to protect the super-wealthy from increased taxes." The delay

is especially hurtful to the union's lowest-paid and part-time members.

"In terms of our confidence in the administration's keeping its promises to us, and good faith, this doesn't bode very well," said Nathan Schrader, an adjunct lecturer in English at LaGuardia Community College. "It might not be a big deal to some people, but to me it makes a difference. I'm the primary earner in my household. My wife is waiting on immigration papers, so she can't technically work. It's my income that's keeping us going here."

Schrader, who leads the LaGuardia PSC chapter's ad hoc committee on adjuncts, noted that the delay occurs at a time when many faculty members are taking on bigger workloads as a result of the pandemic. Faculty, both full-time and part-time, have reported rising class-size caps CUNY-wide. The administration has already laid off more than 2,000 adjunct faculty and staff members since the pandemic began. PSC pressure resulted in the rehiring of more than 700 of those adjuncts, but the union continues to fight every layoff.

"I don't think the administration has ever given a thought to adjunct morale," Schrader told *Clarion*. For many adjuncts, the situation is especially frustrating, as the spring 2021 pay rate will revert to the spring 2020 pay rate. The union explained that "adjuncts received a smaller increase from the first day of the semester," and that their total

earnings for the semester, including the 2% increase as of November 15, were divided evenly among their fall semester paychecks.

The union said, "Instead of leaving the higher rate in place for adjunct faculty and allowing them to continue being paid at this level, CUNY management decided to reduce adjunct faculty rates of pay to their level before the 'smoothed out' 2020 raise was implemented. As a result, the hourly rate for adjunct faculty will be lower in spring 2021 than in fall 2020. The smoothed-out rate for adjunct faculty will also be used for the winter intersession at most colleges, except at LaGuardia, Kingsborough and Guttman."

## MEMBERS SPEAK

Union members have already made their displeasure known to the chancellor by sending him letters demanding that the administration change course. "We will use every legal and contractual remedy available to push CUNY management to pay the full value of our raises and to take a public stand against underfunding," Bowen said in a December 15 letter to members. "Reversing management's position of shifting costs onto workers and students during this crisis may require disruptive union-wide action. PSC members are preparing to be ready."

Governor Andrew Cuomo has said that the delay in raises for state unions is meant to address the budget shortfall caused by the pandemic and failure of the federal government to provide an adequate stimulus to the state. Numerous legislators, unions and community groups have called for higher taxes on the wealthiest.

# CUNY nurse gets first vaccine

By ARI PAUL

Sandra Lindsay, the director of critical care nursing at Long Island Jewish Medical Center, made headlines when she became the first person in the United States to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Images of her taking the shot were signs of hope.

Lindsay is a part of the CUNY family, too – she received her nursing degree from Lehman College. The *New York Times* reported that Lindsay, whose family immigrated from Jamaica, had "volunteered [for the vaccine] in an effort to appeal directly to men and women of color who are skeptical of vaccinations in general," mentioning "the legacy of the Tuskegee study, which began in 1932 and withheld treatment from Black men with syphilis to analyze the effects." Lindsay told the *Times* that the vaccine "is rooted in science, I trust science, and the alternative and what I have seen and experienced is far worse."

## CUNY'S ROLE

"The CUNY system is extremely important because it's an affordable, quality education," she told *Clarion* in an email the day after she received her vaccination. "My experiences there were positive



Northwell Health

Sandra Lindsay received the vaccine in December.

and I felt supported. The professors helped mentor me, get me through my studies there."

Lindsay added that CUNY could play an enormous role in training nurses and other health care workers during a time when front-line workers are needed the most. In the spring, she oversaw the opening of six new intensive care units, taking in triple the usual number of patients, according to the *Times*.

Lehman's nursing program, however, is in crisis, as it lost its accreditation. "[Forty five] Lehman College nursing students expecting

to graduate in January 2021," and "[e]xpectant graduates found out about the college's loss of accreditation this past November," *Gotham Gazette* reported.

"We need to prepare nurses for the next crisis,"

Lindsay said. "No preparation could have prepared me for this. I just didn't know; no one did. Now that we've seen a global pandemic, it's important to incorporate some form of nursing in a crisis into the curriculum. It's not just science but the art of nursing, which is caring for patients, their families and each other at its core."

## Progress in fighting COVID-19



# CUNY needs more mental health counselors

By ARI PAUL

The PSC and student activists agree: The university must invest more money in mental health services in order to hire more counselors.

Student activists from across CUNY testified October 16 at a joint hearing of the City Council's Higher Education Committee and Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction Committee, citing research that showed as many as 40,000 undergraduate students have reported symptoms of depression, as they deal with the added stresses of poverty and the pandemic.

## BLEAK NUMBERS

CUNY's own numbers on the situation are bleak. Denise Maybank, CUNY's interim vice chancellor for student affairs and enrollment management, testified that the average ratio of mental health staff to students is 1:2,595, with one campus at a ratio of 1:6,009. Maybank continued, "The mean staffing-to-student ratio for mental health services according to the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey in 2019 was 1:1,362 [www.aucccd.org]. The International Accreditation of Counseling Services (IACS) organization recommends a ratio of 1:1,500 [www.iacsinc.org]." Students testified about long waiting times and insurance issues, and urged the university to step up efforts to increase student awareness of mental health services through aggressive advertising.

"The needs for mental health services are unusually high compared

## Students, PSC make the case



Dave Sanders

Cindy Bink, PSC chapter chair for higher education officers.

to colleges across the country, considering the stresses our students face," PSC President Barbara Bowen said in her testimony. "Since COVID, those needs have been multiplied, but the services at CUNY are unacceptably low."

## HIGH RATIOS

The testimony of PSC member Pedro Luna, a SEEK counselor at Lehman College, echoed Bowen's. "The student ratio is very high, so it's very hard to give [students] the attention that they need," Luna said. "[Counselors] are very highly quali-

fied, [but] every day their schedule is packed."

The need for more mental health counselors at CUNY has been a concern for the PSC Higher Education Officer (HEO) chapter for two decades. PSC HEO Chapter Chair Cynthia Bink, the director of counseling services at City Tech, stated in written testimony to the CUNY Board of Trustees in October, "Because CUNY is underfunded, we are hiring fewer full-time professional staff that work directly with students. Long-term, full-time professional staff build relationships with students."

Citing an additional CARES Act money, Bink said, "Moving to a remote counseling model increased the need for more staff training and resources. Students were under stress to adjust to remote learning and deal with pandemic-related mental health needs like loss, grief, trauma, depression, anxiety, intimate-person violence and suicidality. Counseling centers lacked resources to quickly connect to students off campus and online. Center directors were grateful that the university was acknowledging the problem by offering additional funding to support student services. For some campuses, temporary and part-time hiring of mental health counselors has been fully approved and hiring has commenced. Funds are limited to this fiscal year only. Any improvement to services will stop on May 14, 2021. There is concern that if the funds cannot be quickly spent, they will be used for other campus needs or returned to the university. Although CUNY has suggested that the May 14 deadline might be extended, uncertainty makes planning difficult."

## NEED TO HIRE

Bink added, "On some campuses it seems there is pressure to spend these funds on anything except full-time hiring, even if proposed expenditures are only marginally related to mental health or would leave substantial funds unspent. Temporary funds are simply not enough to meet the needs of CUNY Counseling Centers. Hiring of additional mental health counselors and services needs to be permanent."

Maybank told the New York City Council at the October hearing that she was moved by what students said about the need for more mental health counseling. "We need to be responsive to our students," she said. "Additional resources are necessary."

## CUNY STATEMENT

The university has, for its part, announced increases in services, saying in a statement, "The \$5 million expansion, supported with funds allocated to the university through the federal CARES Act, will allow CUNY colleges to reach more students with face-to-face online," adding that all "campuses will receive allocations that they can use to expand the clinical staffs of their health and wellness centers and increase their capacity to provide counseling and other services using distance technology."

CUNY vowed to "train and certify 120 campus clinical counselors in providing 'teletherapy' services and to purchase new technology that will make it easier for students to access the mental health support services they might need while the university's classes remain almost entirely online."

City Council Higher Education Chair Inez Barron was pleased to hear the administration was receptive to the student testimony, agreeing that CUNY needed to put more funding into mental health services. "It calls for a very specific allocation of money," Barron said. "This is a golden opportunity for CUNY to step up."

## PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS NOTICE OF NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS – SPRING 2021

### PSC GENERAL OFFICERS

Term of Office: 3 Years

President, First Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, 5 University-wide Officers.  
Vice President, Senior Colleges, and 3 Senior College Officers.  
Vice President, Community Colleges, and 3 Community College Officers.  
Vice President, Cross Campus Chapters, and 3 Cross Campus Officers.  
Vice President, Part-Time Instructional Staff, and 3 Part-Time Instructional Staff Officers.  
Two Retiree Executive Council Officers.

### NYSUT AND AFT CONVENTION DELEGATES

Term of Office: 3 years

100 Convention Delegate Positions

### AAUP ANNUAL MEETING DELEGATES

(Only PSC members designated as members of the AAUP are eligible to run and vote.)

Term of Office: 3 years

4 Delegate Positions

### ELECTION SCHEDULE

1. Deadline for filling a Candidate Declaration form will be January 11, 2021. The form is available online at <https://www.psc-cuny.org/psc-declaration-candidacy> and [tinyurl.com/PSC-declaration-of-candidacy](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-declaration-of-candidacy) and should be submitted to [elections@pscmail.org](mailto:elections@pscmail.org).
2. Pre-printed nominating petitions will be available upon request on February 8, 2021, by emailing [elections@pscmail.org](mailto:elections@pscmail.org).
3. Properly completed nominating petitions must be received by 5:00 pm, March 8, 2021, at [elections@pscmail.org](mailto:elections@pscmail.org) or at the PSC Office, Attn: Elections Committee, 61 Broadway – Ste. 1500, New York, NY 10006.

4. Ballots will be mailed to members' home addresses on April 1, 2021.

5. Ballots in an uncontested AAUP Election must be received at the PSC Office by 5:00 pm on April 29, 2021.

6. **Ballots for the PSC General Election and a contested AAUP Election must be received at American Arbitration Assoc. by 5:00 pm on April 29, 2021, via mail, phone or internet.**

7. Ballots will be counted at 10:00 am on April 30, 2021.

### ELIGIBILITY TO SERVE

To hold a position as a general officer (serving on the Executive Council), one must have been a member in good standing of the PSC for at least one (1) year prior to the close of nominations, March 8, 2021. Among the general officer positions, retiree members may only serve as Retiree Executive Council Officers.

### ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE

To be eligible to vote in this election, one must have been a member in good standing for at least four (4) months prior to the mailing of the ballots, April 1, 2021.

### NOMINATIONS PROCEDURE

1. A Declaration of Candidacy form must be received at [elections@pscmail.org](mailto:elections@pscmail.org) no later than January 11, 2021.
2. Nominations shall be by written petition signed by no less than fifty (50) members of the appropriate constituency in good standing. For the AAUP Delegate positions the written petition must be signed by no fewer than twenty-five (25) of the identified members in good standing of the PSC Chapter of the AAUP.
3. Slate nominations shall be permitted.

### SLATE REGULATIONS

A slate of candidates will be recognized if it consists of candidates for

twenty-five percent (25%) or more of the officers to be elected, and if it submits, prior to the close of nominations: (1) a listing of caucus officers, all of whom must be members in good standing, including the person designated to authorize nominees for that caucus' slate; and (2) a nominating petition including the printed name, signature, department and college of each petitioner, and the signature for each candidate running on the slate. The candidate's signature on the slate petition shall constitute that candidate's acceptance of the slate designation.

### ELECTION RULES

The complete Election Rules and PSC Constitution may be obtained from the PSC website at [tinyurl.com/PSC-election-rules](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-election-rules) and <https://www.psc-cuny.org/about-us/constitution>.

Relevant sections are summarized but not quoted below:

1. All voting must be on an official ballot. Write-in votes are permitted. The intent of the voter must be clear, whether the name of the candidate is written, printed or typed. In order for a write-in vote to be considered valid, the candidate must meet the same eligibility requirements as a regular candidate. A write-in candidate must receive at least ten (10) or ten percent (10%) of the total votes cast in the election, whichever is less, to be elected. Write-in candidates who are elected must submit written acceptance of office to the Elections Committee within ten (10) days of the notification of election results.
2. Each candidate, or a representative designated in writing, is entitled to observe the counting of the ballots.
3. The **March 2021 issue of Clarion** will carry biographies and/or statements by the candidates for general officers. Each candidate for general officer will be allotted 200 words. Slates of candidates for general officer may pool their allotment of words in whatever fashion they choose. The deadline for typed copy is 5:00 pm, **March 1, 2021**. For information on existing *Clarion* photos and to send typed copy, contact the editor, Ari Paul at [apaul@pscmail.org](mailto:apaul@pscmail.org). Candidates

for delegates to the NYSUT, AFT and AAUP conventions will be listed, but they will not receive further space.

Candidates for general officers may purchase not more than a one-half page of advertising space in the March 2021 issue of *Clarion*. Slates may purchase not more than one page of advertising space in the March 2021 issue of *Clarion*. The deadline for camera-ready mechanicals or an equivalent digital file is 5:00 pm, **March 1, 2021**. (Note: It would be helpful to *Clarion* if candidates can give newspaper staff advance notice of their intention to submit statements or advertisements by **February 14, 2021**, or as soon as possible thereafter.) Space limitations preclude an offer of space to candidates for delegates to the NYSUT, AFT and AAUP conventions.

All candidates may mail literature at their own expense through the PSC's mailing house, Century Direct. To request a list, email the membership department at [membership@pscmail.org](mailto:membership@pscmail.org). The Request for List and Labels Form will also be posted on the PSC website. The PSC will provide Century Direct with electronic downloads of members' home addresses, after receiving payment of \$60.00 from the candidate. PSC must have three (3) working days of advance notice to generate and provide these downloads. Contact Century Direct at (212) 763-0600 or [contact@centurydirect.net](mailto:contact@centurydirect.net).

AAUP candidates running for office can purchase the complete list of members of the PSC AAUP Chapter and their work email addresses for \$5.00. The list will be emailed.

Any questions regarding election procedures or materials can be addressed to [elections@pscmail.org](mailto:elections@pscmail.org). All mailed correspondence to the PSC Office regarding elections should be put to the attn. of PSC Elections Committee.



# A New Deal for CUNY

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

Early in 2021, legislators in Albany will introduce breakthrough legislation, A New Deal for CUNY, that would restore free tuition, add full-time positions, lift adjunct pay and invest in the physical plant. Advocates say that the moment is right for a visionary approach. At a CUNY Rising Alliance virtual town hall in December, advocates talked about how to move this legislation forward, why it's needed and how to educate others about the situation.

"We have a chance to turn this crisis into a real, deep opportunity for the working class, for people of color in this state," said Luke Elliott-Negri, the PSC legislative representative. "That involves taxing the rich, and that involves taking a heap of money and applying it to CUNY and a whole bunch of other public services."

## TIME IS NOW

The conditions are right for ambitious aims. Democrats have a super-majority in both state legislative chambers, Elliott-Negri said, meaning lawmakers could override the governor's veto power. With shifting revenue and increasing taxes on the rich, the multibillion-dollar investment needed to reimagine CUNY is there. It is up to PSC members, CUNY students and their allies to create the political will.

"We believe that public higher education is an institution that must be defended. We must fight for it," said Lucas Sanchez, deputy director of New York Communities

## Union, students discuss plan



Juvanie Piquant, chair of the University Student Senate, is a leader in the effort.

for Change. "We need to nourish it. We need to nurture it. And we need to make it grow, and have it be the beacon for the city."

Sanchez cohosted the December 2 town hall, which was attended by more than 800 people, including CUNY faculty, staff, students, alumni, coalition allies and city and state lawmakers.

## THE ROAD AHEAD

Juvanie Piquant, the University Student Senate (USS) chair and the student member of the CUNY Board of Trustees, told politicians at the event, "Your job does not stop at coming to this town hall. Your job is just beginning to continue to fight for us on the floor when the governor is proposing cuts, and it is your job to stand

up and fight back. We will be holding you accountable because we cannot be using CUNY as a slogan."

In addition to the USS and PSC, the CUNY Rising Alliance includes the Hispanic Federation, Brooklyn Black Lives Matter and Young Invincibles.

The draft legislation that would be phased in over five years would make CUNY tuition-free for in-state undergraduates, hire more mental health counselors and academic advisors, increase the ratio of full-time faculty to students, professionalize adjunct compensation and create more opportunities for long-serving adjuncts to become full-time faculty, and invest in critical infrastructure needs.

For Amber Rivero, the John Jay

student government president, the legislation will give students the support they need to graduate on time.

"The many advisors who are there trying to help the entire student body of 15,000 at John Jay are overworked, spread thin and trying their very best," Rivero said. "It's so important for us to increase academic advisement to support our students' success."

## UNION SUPPORT

Khalia Kweli, a program coordinator with the political action and legislation department at DC 37, talked about how the New Deal for CUNY will invest in CUNY's aging infrastructure, where the average CUNY building is 50 years old, with problems including power outages because of outdated electrical systems, debris falling from ceilings and outdated HVAC systems. (Clarion has covered issues of burst pipes, mold and lack of proper temperature control at numerous campuses over the years.)

"There are certain things that are just basic, like the right to learn and to work in an environment that is clean and safe," said Kweli. "Unfortunately, that's not the case for many students and workers within the CUNY community."

The main goal of this event, PSC Vice President Andrea Vásquez told Clarion, was to build a broad campaign for a New Deal for CUNY and to "expand our power and capacity to influence elected officials who can pass this legislation. Win more for CUNY now, but also in the next five years."

To find out more about the New Deal for CUNY, go to [cunyrisingalliance.org/nd4csummary](http://cunyrisingalliance.org/nd4csummary).

## A bold plan for a better CUNY

# Biden on higher ed

Continued from page 2

out a higher education agenda for the new administration's first 100 days. The agenda calls on Biden to expand his plan for free tuition at public colleges and universities, declaring free tuition should apply "regardless of income, citizenship status or criminal record."

## OTHER VIEWS

The group said the new Congress should push for a "federal-state partnership program that improves educational opportunities, particularly for students with limited financial capacity." AAUP President Irene Mulvey also offered ideas to the Biden transition team and focused on issues similar to those Bowen raised: "We support a national movement to increase wages for adjunct faculty in contingent positions. Most are paid literally poverty-level wages. College and university administrations should be held accountable for their employment practices. We are deeply concerned that in the post-pandemic world, higher education will be offered on the backs of contingent faculty. Institutions must be disincentivized from exploiting contingent faculty."

Mulvey added that "higher education has been eroded to a very large degree over the last 10-20 years and that, in general, restoring funding of public higher education must be a top priority."

# PSC-backed senator wins tight race

By ARI PAUL

New York State Senator Andrew Gounardes, a progressive Democrat and a supporter of PSC issues, won re-election in NYS District 22 in a closely watched, tight race against Republican challenger Victor Bruno. After a several-day delay during which the last mail-in ballots were counted, Gounardes ultimately prevailed against a wave of pro-Trump rhetoric in his South Brooklyn district, which includes the neighborhoods of Bay Ridge, Dyker Heights, Bensonhurst, Bath Beach, Gravesend, Gerritsen Beach, Manhattan Beach and Marine Park.

One key to his success? PSC member support.

## PSC MEMBER

Gounardes, a Hunter College alumnus and adjunct instructor at Hunter College, has worked closely with the PSC and other CUNY advocates to call for greater investment in CUNY and the restoration of free tuition. In a 2019 *Gotham Gazette* op-ed co-written with Timothy Hunter, then the chair of the University Student Senate, Gounardes criticized the CUNY administration for failing

## Members turn out for ally



Jen Gaboury, right, speaks to State Senator Andrew Gounardes.

to challenge the disinvestment responsible for low adjunct pay and an inadequate ratio of full-time faculty to students.

Gounardes first made waves two years ago when he unseated entrenched Republican senator Martin Golden. Golden "blocked full funding for CUNY, year after year, and was a chief opponent of speed cameras in school zones – until he got caught with 10 school-zone speeding

tickets," noted PSC President Barbara Bowen. Since assuming office, Gounardes "has been an outspoken ally of the PSC," Bowen said. "He is strongly supportive of the New Deal for CUNY and quickly staked out a position for increased funding for CUNY, not just resistance to cuts. His election in 2018 was pivotal in creating a Democratic majority in the State Senate, enabling passage of the DREAM Act and other

critical bills. Local electoral politics matter." Hunter College PSC Chapter Chair Jen Gaboury is a resident of Gounardes's district and spearheaded the PSC effort to help with Gounardes's reelection. Gaboury told Clarion, "State Senator Andrew Gounardes is CUNY family. He's a Hunter alum, the child and sibling of Brooklyn College alums and has served as an adjunct at CUNY. Among Andrew's first actions in office was introducing a constitutional amendment to make undergraduate public higher education in New York tuition-free. Too often, our allies in the legislature have been insufficiently bold, mitigating cuts rather than pushing to bring revenue back to us."

PSC members phone-banked for Gounardes in the weeks leading up to the election, using a script that described Gounardes as "a stalwart supporter of CUNY who consistently shows up to our ... press conferences, and has prioritized CUNY in his policy platform." Campaign volunteers also pointed out that Gounardes supports investing in CUNY's capital needs and eliminating tuition at CUNY and SUNY.

"Andrew won this race against a multimillion-dollar, dark money campaign funded by billionaire Ronald Lauder. This campaign actively pushed back against the politics of fear in a district in southern Brooklyn that voted to reelect Donald Trump," said Gaboury.

## TAX THE RICH

Justyna Jagielnicka, an HEO at the College Discovery Program at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, said of her reason for phone-banking, "It is time to tax the rich to generate revenue and allocate funding CUNY needs to continue educating members of our communities."

Luke Elliott-Negri, a PSC Executive Council member and the union's new legislative representative, said, "We are thrilled that Sena-

tor Gounardes won reelection and were glad to play our part in pushing him to the finish line. The PSC, the whole CUNY system, the students in it, all New Yorkers who aspire to higher education, and all New Yorkers who aspire to send their children to get post-secondary degrees – the lot of us need Andrew Gounardes and more legislators like him, who are willing to speak up in public and in legislative session for our needs and fight for them no matter who fights back."

## A key friend in the senate





City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal sharply questioned CUNY officials.

# Adjuncts face dire situation as CUNY downsizes

By ARI PAUL

At a November City Council hearing hosted by both the Higher Education and Civil Service and Labor Committees, the CUNY administration went to great lengths to insist that the nearly 2,000 adjunct workers who were not reappointed this year were not “laid off.” Council Member Helen Rosenthal, to put it mildly, wasn’t having it.

“Non-reappointment means lay-off,” she said. “To a human being, it means layoff.”

## ORWELLIAN WORDS

Rosenthal, who serves on the civil service and labor committee, added that the term “non-reappointment” was itself jargon meant to mask what such a bureaucratic action does to a terminated worker. “[Non-reappointment] is a strange phrase, you know. It’s a double negative and it’s really hard to wrap your head around what that means,” she said.

Rosenthal was speaking directly to CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer Matthew Sapienza and Senior Vice Chancellor for Labor Relations Pamela Silverblatt, who were representing the CUNY administration. In the tense encounter, Rosenthal demanded to know what actions the administration took to find other cost savings before, as she put it, taking “the drastic step of adding to the city’s unemployment issue” by laying off adjunct faculty members. Rosenthal specifically asked

## Council, PSC slam admin

about the central administration’s involvement at Medgar Evers College, which terminated all of its adjuncts who were eligible for 3-year appointments. Silverblatt merely responded that every campus had the autonomy to make staffing decisions on its own.

“Come on. No red flag? Please,” Rosenthal said in regard to the massive layoffs of adjunct faculty at the central Brooklyn campus. “What was your discussion with Medgar Evers College? How do you know that they made every effort not to do that?”

Silverblatt, again, responded that college administrations are “entrusted to manage their schools.” Rosenthal was stunned.

“I don’t appreciate your non-answer,” she said. “Like a non-reappointment, that’s a non-answer.”

## CUNY NEEDS ADJUNCTS

City Council Higher Education Committee Chair Inez Barron, too, wasn’t pleased with the administration’s explanation for letting go 3,000 part-time instructors. “We know that CUNY relies on adjuncts for the bulk of the instruction,” she said. “So why are we now gutting that body that is responsible for delivering that instruction?”

Had the pandemic not occurred, the hearing might have been an opportunity to report some good

news for adjuncts: Last year, the union ratified an agreement boosting adjunct faculty pay, as much as 70%, for the lowest-paid instructors over the life of the contract. But the CUNY administration has cited the ongoing state and city budget crisis as a reason for downsizing in the part-time ranks. PSC officials

and members have said this has led to longtime instructors losing income and health insurance, as well as swelling class sizes – a problem that has overwhelmed instructors.

The union is currently fighting the adjunct layoffs through the grievance process.

PSC adjunct faculty members, laid-off faculty members, full-time faculty members and elected union officers testified at the hearing about the dire situation CUNY’s adjuncts are facing today.

“They rushed to lay off adjuncts even before cuts were applied, revealing the deep structural problem of contingency,” PSC President Barbara Bowen said of CUNY management.

She insisted that the Council “demand that CUNY use \$30 million in CARES Act money now to put those adjuncts back on the payroll, regardless of the pressure they are getting from the governor’s budget director, who has been installed on the CUNY Board.”

## CUNY RUNS ON ADJUNCTS

CUNY relies disproportionately on adjuncts to teach classes, as well as part-time workers like non-teaching adjuncts, continuing education teachers and college laboratory technicians. All these people (almost half of the CUNY workforce) work tirelessly to provide support and a world-class education for their working-class students and students of color. You don’t become an adjunct at CUNY unless you care about your students. Adjuncts need better working conditions and protections so that we can provide educational and emotional support for our students – whether by helping with difficult coursework, making time to listen to students’ concerns or connecting them with other resources they may need.

Every adjunct knows students who have experienced the death of a family member, faced job loss or became sick themselves. We cannot support our students if we ourselves are worried about losing our jobs and health insurance, or if we are juggling five, 10, 20 or more students. (Best practices for online teaching suggest about 12 students per class.) Part-timers at CUNY deserve to be recognized and respected for the work we do to make CUNY what it is, and yet we are treated as disposable. We are neither paid sufficiently for our work nor given job security.

## SOME JOBS SAVED

In fact, CUNY administration made the decision to lay off almost 2,000 part-time workers in the middle of the COVID pandemic. Thanks to the union’s advocacy, some workers were able to regain their jobs, but many others are left without income and without any insurance during one of the most serious health and economic crises of our time. (COBRA is simply not a financial option for adjuncts, as the cheapest option is about \$900 per month.) On top of this, at Medgar Evers and Bronx Community College, CUNY fired dozens of adjuncts who had previously been recommended for a three-year contract, one of the few sources of job security offered to adjuncts. This was an insult both to workers and to the union.

We are demanding that laid-off part-time workers get their jobs and health insurance back. CUNY administration would have us believe they are strapped for cash, but other university administrators have taken meaningful pay cuts – more than a mere five-day furlough – that have allowed their universities to continue to function. We have seen no such decency from CUNY, which has not even used federal CARES Act money to preserve our jobs.

## NEED DECENT WAGES

More generally, part-timers simply need to be paid a decent wage. Currently, if I were to work “full-time” as an adjunct (and my earnings are in the higher range of what adjuncts make), teaching six classes a year, I would make \$30,000 a year pre-tax

– about \$19 an hour. This is despite the fact that I have a law degree, and despite the fact that I have a family to provide for. Adjuncts should be paid at least \$7,000 per class, should have meaningful job security, and should be given the ability to transition to a full-time position. What CUNY really needs – specifically what the workers and students need – is a free and fully funded CUNY. It is past time to invest in public institutions like CUNY, through legislation like the millionaires’ tax and the New Deal for CUNY. Our dignity and safety demand it. New York’s recovery demands it.

## ROSA SQUILLACOTE

ADJUNCT ASSISTANT  
PROFESSOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE  
HUNTER COLLEGE  
PSC VICE PRESIDENT, PART-TIME  
PERSONNEL

## ADJUNCTS AT 2-YEARS

This past summer, more than 100 part-time positions were eliminated at Kingsborough Community College (KCC), and many others have had their hours severely curtailed – some of whom had worked at Kingsborough for more than 20 years. No committee or any other form of shared governance was consulted in these decisions at KCC.

Community college students are among the most disadvantaged in New York City and the least prepared for college. They need more individualized attention, not less. CUNY is making up for the lost adjuncts by crowding students into larger classes – lowering the quality of their education. Case in point: For the Spring 2021 semester, English Composition 1 at Kingsborough is capped at 29 students, while at Baruch, the same English Comp classes are capped at only 15 students. I ask the council to consider the following question: Why is it that CUNY sets course caps at one of its flagship campuses in line with national norms, yet has no problem with crowding Kingsborough’s students into classes almost twice that size? CUNY repeatedly publicizes its commitment to equity. I ask the council members, Does this sound like equity to you? That CUNY is an institution where inequity is allowed to flourish is obvious. The time has come for our elected officials to demand answers from the decision-makers as to why they have allowed this to happen. Kingsborough’s students are not “less than,” and it is time to stop treating them as though they are.

## FEELING LEFT BEHIND

The use of contingent labor is inexorably linked to the de-prioritization of community college students at CUNY, and this is evidenced by the diversion of funding for the



classroom and student support. The disadvantaged students of New York need their elected officials to stand up for them and force CUNY to make the right decisions – decisions that will be contrary to the administrative ethos that has dominated CUNY for years, and that continues to fail our students every day.

**SCOTT CALLY**  
PROFESSOR,  
COMMUNICATIONS AND  
PERFORMING ARTS  
PSC CHAPTER CHAIR  
KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE

## IN THE LIBRARIES

I'm here to speak about the situation of non-teaching adjuncts (NTAs) at CUNY, specifically those in the CUNY libraries. As CUNY Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer Matthew Sapienza noted, NTAs perform work identical to full-time faculty in areas including counseling, advising and librarianship. Yet NTAs are paid at an extremely low rate: 60%, not of their full-time peers, but of teaching adjuncts, who themselves make a fraction of full-time wages. Many of these

employees are in the academic “gig economy” and in desperate need of even this form of exploitative employment to survive.

In the libraries, NTAs provide essential reference, instruction and other library services. As full-time staffing levels have dropped and as the hiring freeze has been extended, NTAs have been essential in maintaining any semblance of normal service levels for CUNY students and faculty who depend on the libraries for their academic and scholarly success. Additionally, they have been at the heart of CUNY's Open Educational Resources (OER) initiatives.

### HOURS CUT

As a result of CUNY's voluntary and unnecessary decision to follow Betsy DeVos's optional guidance and the university's failure to act independently to use CARES Act money to keep workers on payroll as Congress intended, many NTAs have had their hours cut.

NTAs were one of several titles in the PSC to experience harrowing month-to-month employment prior to CUNY adopting a temporary budget, and they may be in that position again going forward. The precarity our adjuncts experience is already terrible, and the level of precarity inflicted on them in recent months is wholly unacceptable. It must not happen again.

In addition to having hours cut and receiving monthly contracts,

some NTAs were, from the onset of the semester, only given work until the end of October. Other library NTAs, particularly those working in the area of OER, were reappointed but haven't been called back to work due to state allocated OER funding not having yet come through.

It's shameful that the most vulnerable employees in CUNY are bearing the brunt of CUNY's DeVos-guided choices. It bears noting that, despite the current crisis, CUNY enrollment is near an all-time high. We need investment in CUNY not only to keep our NTAs on the job and in the service of our students, but so that we can fill full-time vacancies with these amazing librarians and grow our services to meet the needs of our record-breaking enrollment.

**ROBERT FARRELL**  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, LIBRARY  
PSC CHAPTER CHAIR  
LEHMAN COLLEGE

## JOB CUTS HURT

This summer, 2,800 people were laid off across CUNY. Many lost their health insurance if not their job. There was a lawsuit against CUNY for not using the federal CARES Act money allotted to the university (\$251,000,000) to keep-paying its employees during this crisis. Legislators such as Congressman Max Rose have written letters to Chancellor Matos Rodriguez stating very clearly that their intent in enacting the law was to

support CUNY in keeping employees insured and on the job during this extremely difficult time.

### SUBSTANDARD PAY

We adjuncts make under \$5,000 a class per semester, well under standards determined by organizations such as the MLA. Most likely it is these low wages that have appealed to administrators at CUNY, since we also make up the majority of the workforce. Yet after 2,800 people were laid off, Matos Rodriguez stated on the Brian Lehrer Show that no full-time employees lost their jobs. The idea is that we're part-time, so expendable. I have 77 students. Does that sound part-time?

Please consider the plight of adjuncts and tax the uber-wealthy to fund our institution and undo the slow bleed of austerity that is increasing now during this crisis.

**IAN ROSS SINGLETON**  
ADJUNCT ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
AND ADJUNCT LECTURER,  
ENGLISH  
BARUCH COLLEGE AND CITY TECH

## A PERSONAL LOSS

Along with hundreds of other adjuncts, at the end of June, I received a three-line form email from the college HR director informing me that I would not be reappointed for the fall semester.

My years as an adjunct started in the spring semester of 1972. Yes, that's correct. Forty-eight ago

I became a “temporary” employee. Since that time, I was offered courses each semester by each of the department's four different chairpersons, until now.

I received not a personal word in regard to my impending departure from the college. Nothing. Not from the department chair and not from the director of HR, in spite of both of them knowing me for decades. I'm not surprised. Over 22 years ago I took a semester off to help a dying parent who lived out of state. When I returned to the college, after my father's death, I was rewarded by the college for being a caring son with a reduction in rank from adjunct assistant professor to adjunct lecturer. The administrators, at least at this college, are far too busy with important matters to waste any of their precious time or effort on being decent human beings.

### CUNY ADMIN AT FAULT

CUNY's administration is an utter disgrace in their mishandling of this mess. It was totally unprepared in regard to how to handle the disaster of COVID-19, and I found that its greatest concern seemed to be how adjuncts like me were going to meet their office hour requirements once we went over to online teaching. I would be happy if CUNY's administrators signed up for my course. They might actually learn about contingency planning and how to do their jobs as responsible, fair-minded managers.

**BERNARD A. BILAWSKY**  
ADJUNCT LECTURER  
BUSINESS  
QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE

## REAPPOINTED, BUT NOT REASSIGNED

In June, I received notice that I would not be assigned any summer session classes at LaGuardia Community College's English Language Center. I received the same email in August about the fall session, despite having been reappointed, as I have been for three decades at CUNY, for the new academic year. I stand before you, with four decades of teaching experience – three of them at CUNY colleges, two of them at The English Language Center (TELC) – with all the requisite degrees, without a paycheck, without health coverage, without any kind of assurance that I will be assigned teaching hours in the future, and having had to suddenly alter my plans and dreams.

### NEED HEALTH CARE

I have become “expensive.” And so has my medication, which formerly cost \$20, and now costs \$670.

This, after two decades of helping students learn through essay collections containing seven to 10 multi-draft essays each; of spending a minimum of nine hours per week on the essays from only one section; of developing materials for readings, from Shirley Jack-

son to E. B. White, from MLK to AOC; of having to find innovative solutions to broken copiers and no access to the LaGCC print shop; of having to hustle for whiteboard markers; of having to quickly learn to teach remotely through Schoology, Zoom, Google Docs and Blackboard; of having to figure out scanning with my cell phone; of many uncompensated extra hours with students; of a night class of 26 students in three levels, all of whom excelled.

### STUDENTS ARE WORKERS

My students have been pole dancers and surgeons, busboys and engineers, chefs and lawyers, construction workers and TV news anchors, architects and office cleaners, tired Amazon warehouse workers, street food vendors, future nurses, essential workers, teenagers, senior citizens, parents, gay, straight, trans.

Some have fled violence and war. They have had spouses killed in Windows on the World on 9/11, and they have had relatives in ICE detention. They have come from all over the world, and have continued at LaGuardia, CUNY, and other col-

leges around the city and country.

For 20 years, at TELC, I have provided them with challenge and support. With my adjunct colleagues, I wish to continue doing so.

I respect our challenges. But let's look to history. As PSC President Bowen has pointed out, Brooklyn College was created during the Great Depression. The crisis should be a shared burden, not an opportunity to balance budgets on the backs of adjuncts, whose contribution to CUNY is almost impossible to overstate, and has never been paid in full.

I respect this crisis. But the crisis will end, and with my thousands of adjunct colleagues I ask that council members and college administrators listen carefully to what we are saying, commit to rehiring adjuncts, to doing what it takes to invest in the largest public university system in the U.S., because not only is it the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do.

**REBECCA VAUGHAN**  
ADJUNCT LECTURER  
THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER  
LAGUARDIA COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE



Rose Squillacote is the PSC vice president for part-time personnel.

Dave Sanders



# The PSC response to COVID-19

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything for the PSC.

Throughout March, the union updated its 30,000 members almost daily on their rights, required workplace safety and health measures, and how to shift to remote work during the pandemic. Concerted and continued pressure on the part of the PSC brought a reluctant CUNY to the bargaining table to negotiate over working conditions and concerns about health and safety measures under COVID-19. The agreements from the union's negotiations can be read in full at [tinyurl.com/impact-bargaining-agreements](https://tinyurl.com/impact-bargaining-agreements).

Then came the "Summer of Struggle," as union members continued to organize and the PSC maintained its political and legal pressure through socially distanced actions and ongoing demands to safeguard health insurance, employment and acceptable health and safety measures for all its members. The summer campaign built on the momentum the union had developed in the spring, as the PSC mobilized hundreds of members to push Albany for more revenue. As the summer continued, the struggle broadened to include mass uprisings against the systemic racism exposed by the epidemic.

Below is a timeline of how the PSC fought to secure the work, health and safety of CUNY faculty, staff and students in a time of unprecedented crisis. The struggle will continue in 2021. Join us: Contact your chapter leadership and get involved ([tinyurl.com/psc-chapter-leadership](https://tinyurl.com/psc-chapter-leadership)).

## FRIDAY, MARCH 6

### PSC REQUESTS NEGOTIATIONS WITH CUNY ADMINISTRATION IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC.

A letter to CUNY Chancellor Félix V. Matos Rodríguez from union leadership asserts the legal right of the union to be a part of discussions for plans that affect the health and safety and work schedules of PSC members. PSC President Barbara Bowen asks detailed questions about cleaning and decontamination procedures, supplies, training, continuity of instruction, availability of resources for students if classes shift online, guarantee of full pay for adjunct faculty and hourly employees, accommodations for immunocompromised faculty and staff, and employee sick leave policies unique to the pandemic.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-request-to-negotiate](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-request-to-negotiate)

## SATURDAY, MARCH 7

### GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO DECLARES A STATE OF EMERGENCY IN NEW YORK STATE.

With case numbers mounting, Cuomo issues a state of emergency that empowers local health departments

## A 2020 timeline of action

to expedite certain tasks, including procuring cleaning supplies and allowing health-care officials other than doctors and nurses to conduct COVID-19 testing.

Link: [tinyurl.com/Cuomo-state-of-emergency](https://tinyurl.com/Cuomo-state-of-emergency)

## MONDAY, MARCH 9

### PSC ISSUES PRELIMINARY DEMANDS ON COVID-19.

The PSC issues demands on behalf of its 30,000 bargaining-unit mem-

juncts will lose pay. CUNY offers an outline of university efforts that include an updated website as the primary method of communicating to the CUNY community; a coronavirus task force and a list of point people at each college; a draft of FAQs for human resources directors that summarizes work being done; CDC and NYS Department of Health guidance on safety and health measures; and ongoing discussions with the state and city of

campuses remain open, including dorms, libraries, research facilities and daycare centers.

Link: [tinyurl.com/CUNY-covid-plan](https://tinyurl.com/CUNY-covid-plan)

## THURSDAY, MARCH 12

### PSC RESPONDS TO CUNY'S CORONAVIRUS PLAN AND PUSHES FOR MORE REMOTE WORK OPTIONS.

CUNY's plan creates remote work for teaching faculty, while non-teaching faculty and professional staff are still expected to work on campus. Classes move to distance learning, but campuses remain open. Union leadership pushes for

remote-work policy, saying all employees should be treated equally during the public health crisis and asserting that campus presidents making individual campus decisions on remote work is bad policy. The PSC states its willingness to negotiate to maintain essential functions, including payroll and computing needs.

Link: [tinyurl.com/transition-to-remote-work](https://tinyurl.com/transition-to-remote-work)

## SUNDAY, MARCH 15

### AFTER PERSISTENT PSC PRESSURE, CUNY ANNOUNCES, "ONLY CUNY ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL SHOULD REPORT TO WORK TOMORROW."

After more than 4,000 letters are sent in a single afternoon to Chancellor Matos Rodríguez and CUNY Board of Trustees Chair Bill Thompson demanding that CUNY employees work remotely, CUNY concedes. The letter, signed by members, states, "We want to work, but we do not want to endanger our students, our families, our city and ourselves by traveling to work in this crowded city and working in close proximity on CUNY campuses." Members agree that the decision to move to distance learning is a good decision, but more needs to be done.

Link: [tinyurl.com/shift-to-remote-work](https://tinyurl.com/shift-to-remote-work)

## MONDAY, MARCH 16

### PSC CALLS TO LIMIT ON-CAMPUS WORK.

CUNY leaves the discretion of defining "essential personnel" to college presidents and deans. The union urges members not to report to work unless they were previously designated as essential, even if a supervisor deems a lab, library or other CUNY office to be essential. The union advises members to notify supervisors when following the directives of their union and the chancellor's initial message, and to document work being done from home.

Link: [tinyurl.com/clarify-essential-personnel](https://tinyurl.com/clarify-essential-personnel)

## MONDAY, MARCH 16

### CHANCELLOR DETAILS CUNY'S CORONAVIRUS PLAN.

The chancellor writes that campus presidents and deans are to determine which employees are needed on campus, and what facilities, including libraries, research facilities and computer laboratories, need to remain open, even if on a limited basis. Food pantries and childcare centers at CUNY campuses remain open at the order of the governor.

Link: [tinyurl.com/CUNY-covid-response-update](https://tinyurl.com/CUNY-covid-response-update)

## MONDAY, MARCH 16

### PSC CALLS ON CUNY TO WORK WITH THE UNION TO DEVELOP ADEQUATE EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY PLANS.

The PSC criticizes CUNY for not having a contingency plan already in place after emergencies such as 9/11, the H1N1 flu and Hurricane Sandy. All college laboratories and libraries must close, the union says, and the



Jud Gutteau

bers that include: informing the CUNY community about cleaning and decontamination plans; allowing members at higher COVID-19 risk or members who share a residence with someone at higher risk the option to work remotely; identifying faculty with expertise in on-line instruction to lead trainings and be compensated accordingly; allowing professional staff the option to work in staggered shifts; providing paid sick leave for all PSC members who suspect they may have contracted COVID-19; providing paid sick days for all CUNY employees; and reporting to PSC weekly, and addressing any problems within 24 hours, regarding the functionality of hand-washing facilities in all CUNY public restrooms.

Link: [tinyurl.com/initial-corona-demands](https://tinyurl.com/initial-corona-demands)

## MONDAY, MARCH 9

### THE CUNY CHANCELLOR RESPONDS.

The CUNY chancellor responds in a letter that CUNY is "dealing with [problems] in due course, as circumstances arise," but that concerns over canceled classes are "premature." The union fears ad-

New York on measures being taken. In the letter, the chancellor acknowledges the need – or the university's legal obligation – to negotiate with the PSC over health and safety measures and changes to members' work schedules.

Link: [tinyurl.com/Matos-covid-letter](https://tinyurl.com/Matos-covid-letter)

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

### PSC ISSUES GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF SICK DAYS AND WORKING REMOTELY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

The union advises members who are unwell for any reason to stay home and members who want to work remotely to contact their college human resources office and immediate supervisor to request an accommodation. The union tells members to fulfill work obligations and document work performed each day.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-guidance-remote-work](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-guidance-remote-work)

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

### CUNY ANNOUNCES ITS CORONAVIRUS PLAN.

CUNY outlines a transition to "distance education" for the rest of Spring semester while all CUNY

wider latitude in workers' ability to work remotely.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-response-CUNY-plan](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-response-CUNY-plan)

## THURSDAY, MARCH 12

### NEW YORK CITY MAYOR BILL DE BLASIO DECLARES A STATE OF EMERGENCY.

With nearly 100 confirmed cases in the city and projections of a tenfold increase in the next week, de Blasio calls developments "striking and troubling." In his declaration, the mayor prioritizes keeping schools, mass transit and the health-care system running. A few days later, the mayor announces that New York City's schools are shutting down beginning March 16 with remote learning to begin March 23.

Link: [tinyurl.com/NYC-state-of-emergency](https://tinyurl.com/NYC-state-of-emergency)

## FRIDAY, MARCH 13

### PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP DECLARES A NATIONAL EMERGENCY.

## SATURDAY, MARCH 14

### PSC CALLS FOR ALL WORK TO BE PERFORMED REMOTELY.

PSC advocates for a CUNY-wide



number of essential employees on each campus should be minimized.

Link: [tinyurl.com/develop-emergency-plans](https://tinyurl.com/develop-emergency-plans)

#### MONDAY, MARCH 16

##### THOUSANDS OF PSC MEMBERS BEGIN SENDING LETTERS TO SEVERAL STATE LAWMAKERS INVOLVED IN FINALIZING THE BUDGET.

As the NYS budget is being finalized, PSC members send more than 9,000 letters to key state lawmakers, including State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senate Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris, Senate Finance Chair Liz Krueger and Governor Andrew Cuomo to demand a tax increase on the ultra-rich in order to safeguard funds for public agencies on the frontlines in the fight against COVID-19, and for underfunded public institutions, including schools and higher education. "As this country saw during the Great Depression, crises can spawn hopeful, bold, expansive investment or, alternatively, fear, retreat and disinvestment. We need the former," the letter states.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-letter-to-lawmakers](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-letter-to-lawmakers)

#### TUESDAY, MARCH 17

##### TALKS BEGIN BETWEEN PSC LEADERSHIP AND CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ.

Some colleges essentially closed, Lehman College, Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, but others remain open. Progress is made on some issues with CUNY management, but CUNY refuses to negotiate on the urgent union demand that all PSC-represented employees work remotely under a single protocol followed by all CUNY colleges. The PSC urges its members to write letters to the college presidents asserting that "essential staff" should be strictly defined as staff whose on-site work is required in order to maintain emergency operations.

Link: [tinyurl.com/CUNY-patchwork-plan](https://tinyurl.com/CUNY-patchwork-plan)

#### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

##### PSC CALLS ON CUNY TO CLOSE CAMPUS BUILDINGS AND LIBRARIES AND SHIFT TO WORKING REMOTELY.

Despite confirmed cases of CO-

VID-19 at Brooklyn College, Bronx Community College, John Jay College, Lehman College, Queens College and Guttman Community College, as well as suspected cases reported CUNY-wide, CUNY requires thousands of non-emergency workers to continue to report to campuses, including many faculty and staff who work in the colleges' libraries, counseling centers and other offices.

Link: [tinyurl.com/call-to-close-CUNY](https://tinyurl.com/call-to-close-CUNY)

#### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

##### PSC ISSUES GUIDANCE ON WHAT TO DO IF ASKED TO WORK ON CAMPUS.

The union gives guidance to members being required to report to work in person that includes: checking in with supervisors prior to coming in; using sick days or emergency leave days if feeling unwell; demanding protective clothing and equipment; asking for a written explanation on why their job is considered "essential"; asking for accommodations if

categorized as being at higher risk or if living with someone who is; detailing to supervisors in writing why a workplace is considered unsafe (such as an inability to maintain social distancing).

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-guidance](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-guidance)

#### FRIDAY, MARCH 20

##### GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES "NEW YORK STATE ON PAUSE" EXECUTIVE ORDER.

Cuomo orders non-essential businesses to close in-office personnel functions by the evening of March 22, but excludes essential businesses, including health-care facilities, utility companies, trash and recycling, grocery stores, pharmacies, food manufacturers, banks and news media, among others.

Link: [tinyurl.com/NYS-Pause-Order](https://tinyurl.com/NYS-Pause-Order)

#### MONDAY, MARCH 23

##### PSC PUSHES AGAIN FOR A CLEAR DEFINITION OF "ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL" IN LIGHT OF CUOMO'S EXECUTIVE ORDER.

With Governor Cuomo's executive order in effect, the PSC asks CUNY to provide a list of essential PSC-represented employees (including instructional staff at Educational Opportunity Centers and Research Foundation workers) and detail the health and safety measures ensuring that essential employees have the necessary protective clothing and equipment and properly sanitized and cleaned workplaces. "The PSC takes the position that employees who are required to report to work during a pandemic should receive additional compensation, and we seek to negotiate that with you," writes Barbara Bowen in a letter to CUNY Chancellor Matos Rodríguez.

Link: [tinyurl.com/define-essential-worker](https://tinyurl.com/define-essential-worker)

#### TUESDAY, MARCH 24 CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ ANNOUNCES A "RECALIBRATION"

#### PERIOD AND ISSUES A "CLARIFICATION" IN RESPONSE TO UNION PRESSURE.

Without consultation with the PSC, Matos Rodríguez announces a recess that he calls "CUNY's Recalibration Period for Educational Equity" set to begin on Friday, March 27, and to last until Wednesday, April 1, in order to give students time to get needed equipment, and faculty time to "fine-tune" teaching virtually. The recess also shortens CUNY's spring break to three days, from April 8 to 10.

After union pushback, the chancellor issues another message the next day reiterating his rationale for the period, restoring the days off.

Links: [tinyurl.com/CUNY-recalibration-period](https://tinyurl.com/CUNY-recalibration-period) | [tinyurl.com/CUNY-clarity-recalibration](https://tinyurl.com/CUNY-clarity-recalibration)

#### THURSDAY, APRIL 2

##### PSC ASKS CUNY TO SUSPEND REMOTE WORK GUIDELINES UNTIL CUNY AND PSC CAN BARGAIN OVER THEM.

As several CUNY colleges issue guidelines about remote work that include changes to mandatorily negotiable terms in the collective bargaining agreement, the PSC seeks to suspend their implementation. Telecommuting guidelines for professional staff at the Graduate Center, for example, require employees to submit telecommuting plans to their supervisors for approval, an expectation that people work at the same or similar levels of productivity as when on campus, and the requirement that employees submit a summary of work on a schedule determined by their supervisor.

Link: [tinyurl.com/suspend-remote-work-guidelines](https://tinyurl.com/suspend-remote-work-guidelines)

#### TUESDAY, APRIL 21

##### PSC SHARES THE FIRST SUPPLEMENTAL COVID-19 LABOR AGREEMENT NEGOTIATED BETWEEN THE UNION AND CUNY MANAGEMENT.

The emergency agreement con-

cerning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on contractual terms covering members covers classroom teaching observations, annual evaluations for both staff and faculty, office hours conducted through distance technology, decisions on tenure, and reclassification and salary differentials that were already in process on March 12. It takes retroactive effect from March 12.

Faculty candidates under tenure consideration in Fall 2020 are permitted to request a one-year extension of their tenure clock. Faculty with tenure consideration dates that occur after Fall 2020 may apply for an extension later. The union continues to negotiate with CUNY management on crucial issues, including three-year adjunct appointments and expanding health insurance coverage to all CUNY doctoral students.

Link: [tinyurl.com/first-corona-agreement](https://tinyurl.com/first-corona-agreement)

#### THURSDAY, APRIL 23

##### PSC PRESIDENT BARBARA BOWEN URGES MEMBERS TO TAKE ACTION IN THE FACE OF SEVERAL MASSIVE BUDGET CUTS AND ANTICIPATION OF BUDGET SHORTFALLS.

Several colleges move to slash their course offerings in anticipation of budget shortfalls, implicitly sending the message that cuts at CUNY are inevitable and acceptable. In response, Bowen says that CUNY management should be demanding new investment in public institutions for the common good and calls on members to submit letters, saying they will not accept "panicked, ill-informed plans to reduce course offerings." More than 3,500 letters are sent to CUNY Chancellor Matos Rodríguez and CUNY Board of Trustees Chair Bill Thompson.

Link: [tinyurl.com/Bowen-video-message](https://tinyurl.com/Bowen-video-message)

#### FRIDAY, MAY 8

##### THE UNION SENDS A COMPREHENSIVE BARGAINING AGENDA FOR THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS TO THE CUNY CHANCELLOR.

The union's bargaining team and chapter leadership draft an agenda that includes more than 40 demands around health and safety, salary, health insurance and sick leave, workload, scheduling and telecommuting, distance technology, leave, professional development and appointments, and promotions and reclassification. The agenda rests on a ten-point bargaining framework based on the principle that employees remain on the payroll with health insurance and that on-campus work should not resume until it is safe. "The union's proposals are not about managing austerity or accommodating to budget cuts," says PSC President Barbara Bowen. "They are about taking a stand against the dismantling of the university and for new investment in the nation's largest urban university."

Link: [tinyurl.com/impact-bargaining-proposals](https://tinyurl.com/impact-bargaining-proposals)



Jud Guiteau



Jud Guiteau



# PSC COVID-19 response

Continued from page 9

**MONDAY, MAY 11**

## PSC MEMBERS FLOOD THE CUNY BOARD OF TRUSTEES WITH MORE THAN 2,300 TESTIMONIES IN THE FACE OF LOOMING BUDGET CUTS AND MASS LAYOFFS OF ADJUNCTS.

Canceling the customary hearings held a week prior to a scheduled board meeting, the CUNY Board of Trustees instead announces it will only accept written testimony for its May meeting. CUNY faculty and staff respond with more than 2,300 protest statements addressing public college's crucial role in society in times of economic downturn when enrollment typically increases, investing in people and not just throwing technological "solutions" at a problem, and extending funding for doctoral students in keeping with practices at other colleges. Members call on board members to be "aggressive in [their] advocacy" for additional money and to cut salaries in the Executive Compensation Plan rather than eliminate jobs crucial to the livelihoods and health insurance coverage of adjuncts and other contingent employees.

Link: [tinyurl.com/BOT-protest-statement](https://tinyurl.com/BOT-protest-statement)

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 13**

## CUNY AND PSC EXTEND ADJUNCT APPOINTMENT NOTIFICATION DEADLINE TO MAY 29.

Faced with potential job loss, hundreds of adjuncts across CUNY are given a two-week extension of their May 15 adjunct reappointments/non-reappointments deadline, thus giving adjuncts more time to fight and organize against mass layoffs.

**THURSDAY, MAY 14**

## CUNY DEPARTMENT CHAIRS SIGN A PSC STATEMENT DENOUNCING ADJUNCT LAYOFFS AND COURSE OFFERING REDUCTIONS.

Local PSC chapters, along with department chairs, organize across CUNY against preemptive cuts that include a 25% decrease in course offerings at Brooklyn College and a 35% reduction at the College of Staten Island, as well as plans to lay off more than 430 adjuncts at John Jay. Several college depart-

ment chairs sign a letter calling the move "morally repugnant." The letter states that "In this crisis, the CUNY administration should defend the city's public university, not capitulate to budget cuts before they are even announced by state and city governments." More than 220 department chairs and interdisciplinary program directors have signed the letter.

Link: [tinyurl.com/department-chair-letter](https://tinyurl.com/department-chair-letter)

**FRIDAY, MAY 15**

## U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ JOINS THE PSC IN DENOUNCING PLANS FOR MASS LAYOFFS AND CALLS FOR NEW TAXES ON THE ULTRA-RICH.

In a Zoom press conference, Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez joins the call against austerity saying, "In a time of economic crisis, we need to be investing in New York City's working-class institutions, not destroying hundreds of good union jobs.... Austerity is not the answer, solidarity is. I stand with PSC-CUNY in its fight for a CUNY that works for the working class of New York – students, staff and faculty alike."

At John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the administration announces plans to cut 437 adjunct positions, nearly 40 percent of the college's teaching faculty. Department chairs at the College of Staten Island are ordered to decrease course offerings by 35 percent. The employment of thousands of adjuncts, many of whose health insurance is tied to their jobs, hangs in the balance – all before any state and city budget cuts are even enacted.

State lawmakers talk about proposed legislation that would help increase revenue, including an ultra-millionaires' tax, designating tax revenue streams for CUNY and SUNY, and allocating the revenue from a millionaire's tax to public schools and higher education. A state senator calls the layoffs "beyond short-sighted." Slashing the teaching force and reducing course offerings stand to affect hundreds of thousands of CUNY students – and countless other working-class New Yorkers who turn to public higher education to transform their lives.

Link: [tinyurl.com/mass-layoffs-presser](https://tinyurl.com/mass-layoffs-presser)

**SUNDAY, MAY 18**

## SCORES OF PSC MEMBERS TAKE PART IN THE "CARAVAN TO SAVE JOBS AND FUND CUNY."

PSC members take to the streets of Midtown and Upper East Side of Manhattan as a moving caravan of more than 50 cars and 30 bicyclists to demand that CUNY keep all its employees working and on health insurance during the pandemic. The caravan starts near CUNY Central on 42nd Street, makes its way past Governor Andrew Cuomo's Manhattan office and then heads north to the Upper East Side past the homes of New York billionaires and the ultra-rich, including Stephen Schwartzman, a major Wall Street backer to President Trump, and Stephen Mnuchin, Trump's Treasury Secretary. The protest coincides with the scheduled CUNY Board of Trustees meeting.

Link: [tinyurl.com/caravan-protest-photos](https://tinyurl.com/caravan-protest-photos)

**MONDAY, MAY 18**

## PSC PRESIDENT BOWEN CALLS ON BOARD CHAIR THOMPSON AND CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ TO RESCIND AND HALT ALL NON-REAPPOINTMENTS OF FACULTY AND STAFF.

In a letter, Bowen and the PSC call on CUNY leaders to provide a public accounting of the university's budget, including allocations from federal stimulus money, an estimate of year-to-end reserves, enrollment projections, cost-savings from shutting down campuses during the crisis, and other areas in the CUNY budget that could be cut. The letter argues that as leaders of the nation's largest urban university, Matos Rodríguez and Thompson should be advocating for the university's expansion during this unprecedented crisis where CUNY will play a vital role in the city's economic recovery. Course reductions and mass layoffs, including the loss of health insurance for many, are not the solution. "The job of university management is to protect and enhance CUNY, not manage its destruction," says Bowen.

Link: [tinyurl.com/open-letter-BOT](https://tinyurl.com/open-letter-BOT)

**MONDAY, MAY 25**

## PSC LAUNCHES "HURTING CUNY MEANS HURTING OUR RECOVERY" COMMERCIAL.

A 30-second ad advocating against budget cuts and layoffs airs more than 450 times on cable news networks in New York City and is shown tens of thousands of times on social media. "CUNY has lifted generations of New Yorkers out of poverty and serves the communities hardest hit by this crisis," the TV ad says. "Tell CUNY not to turn its back on our city's most vulnerable communities during this crisis."

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-layoff-video](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-layoff-video)

**WEEK OF MAY 25**

## THOUSANDS OF LETTERS TO CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ AND CUNY TRUSTEES URGE THE BOARD TO RESCIND LAYOFFS AND STOP MASS NON-REAPPOINTMENTS.

In a letter demanding trustees use



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their influence to support progressive taxation to raise revenue in the city and the state, thousands of signees affirm "CUNY will be essential to any economic recovery for New York. But New York City's public university cannot help to rebuild the economy and workforce of our battered, traumatized city if the trustees see their role as nothing more than managing CUNY's destruction."

Link: [tinyurl.com/no-layoffs-letter](https://tinyurl.com/no-layoffs-letter)

**FRIDAY, MAY 29**

## CUNY AND PSC AGREE TO EXTEND DEADLINE FOR ADJUNCT APPOINTMENT NOTIFICATIONS TO JUNE 30, 2020.

A PSC-CUNY agreement creates a process for PSC and CUNY to meet before the end of June to address instances where adjuncts stand to lose their health insurance through CUNY and states that any adjunct appointment already made shall not be rescinded. Management also agrees to the union demand to provide detailed CUNY and college budget information, including proposed cuts, information about the state and city fiscal situation related to CUNY, and enrollment projections.

Link: [tinyurl.com/reappointment-extension](https://tinyurl.com/reappointment-extension)

**SUNDAY, MAY 31**

## PSC RELEASES A STATEMENT CONDEMNING THE MURDER OF GEORGE FLOYD.

The union condemns the killing by police and shows that the COVID crisis has laid bare the way the U.S. is structured by racial violence. Hundreds of PSC members and CUNY students join anti-racist protests throughout the summer.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-statement-George-Floyd](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-statement-George-Floyd)

**TUESDAY, JUNE 2**

## PSC LAUNCHES "SAVE LIVES, SAVE JOBS, SAVE CUNY" MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN WITH THE GOAL OF ENGAGING EACH OF ITS 30,000

## MEMBERS IN A ONE-ON-ONE CONVERSATION BY THE END OF THE SUMMER.

In the face of a major public struggle against deep cuts to CUNY during a catastrophic recession, the "union needs to create enough support and communication among members to be able to take whatever strong action is necessary," says PSC President Barbara Bowen. "Building that support starts with member-to-member conversations."

Link: [tinyurl.com/thirty-thousand-conversations](https://tinyurl.com/thirty-thousand-conversations)

**TUESDAY, JUNE 23**

## MORE THAN 100 PSC MEMBERS FORM A SOCIALLY DISTANCED HUMAN CHAIN FROM CUNY HEADQUARTERS ON 42ND STREET TO GOVERNOR CUOMO'S MIDTOWN MANHATTAN OFFICE.

Wearing masks, holding posters and banners, and keeping more than six feet apart, CUNY faculty and staff protest cuts to CUNY and the plan to potentially lay off thousands of adjuncts as the June 30 adjunct reappointment deadline looms. Hundreds of additional members join via Zoom. "This is serious, and we are in the fight of our lives," PSC President Barbara Bowen tells protesters. "The answer to this fight is more and more organized struggle."

Link: [tinyurl.com/stand-together-CUNY](https://tinyurl.com/stand-together-CUNY)

**FRIDAY, JUNE 26**

## NEW YORK ELECTED OFFICIALS JOIN THE PSC CALL TO DEMAND A STOP TO CUNY CUTS AND LAYOFFS.

More than 70 elected state and city officials sign on to a letter to CUNY Board Chair Thompson and Chancellor Matos Rodríguez demanding a stop to CUNY cuts and layoffs. "This is the wrong time – morally, politically and fiscally – to cut CUNY," states the June 26 letter. "New York will need CUNY more than ever as we seek to rebuild the economy and create a more just world."



Jud Guiteau



**SATURDAY, JUNE 27****PSC JOINS CUNY UNIVERSITY STUDENT SENATE MARCH FOR RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE ACROSS THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE.**

Hundreds of CUNY students, faculty and staff, along with elected NYC leaders, march across the Brooklyn Bridge from Brooklyn Borough City Hall to New York City Hall to demand \$16 million dollars from the NYPD budget get redirected to CUNY to offset budget cuts and a possible tuition hike at the community colleges. “We cannot separate the Black Lives Matter movement from CUNY,” Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams tells the crowd of protesters. “There is no reason CUNY cannot cut the fat and stop cutting the faculty.” Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer and New York State Queens Assembly-member Khaleel Anderson are also in attendance.

Link: [tinyurl.com/fund-CUNY-defund-NYPD](https://tinyurl.com/fund-CUNY-defund-NYPD)

**TUESDAY, JUNE 30****2,800 CUNY ADJUNCTS ARE LAID OFF AND MORE THAN 400 LOSE THEIR HEALTH INSURANCE.**

An estimated 2,800 adjuncts, or roughly one-fifth of the CUNY adjunct workforce, receive non-reappointments for Fall 2020. A projected 422 of those also lose their adjunct health insurance eligibility for the fall. More than 4,000 CUNY faculty and staff immediately sign a petition stating, “The CUNY administration is only too happy to rely on adjuncts to sustain the university despite inadequate public funding. Now, when our students are in greatest need of support, and when New Yorkers without income and health insurance are most vulnerable, you treat the adjunct faculty and staff as disposable.”

Link: [tinyurl.com/no-layoffs-petition](https://tinyurl.com/no-layoffs-petition)

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 1****PSC FILES A FEDERAL LAWSUIT AGAINST CUNY CHARGING THAT THE UNIVERSITY VIOLATED ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE CARES ACT BY LAYING OFF THOUSANDS OF PART-TIME EMPLOYEES.**

In a court case filed in the Southern District of New York, the PSC seeks an injunction on the nearly 3,000 layoffs of CUNY adjuncts to halt layoffs and reinstate jobs. The PSC argues that in accepting more than \$250 million dollars in federal funding under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) the university explicitly agreed “to the greatest extent practicable” to pay its employees “during the period of any disruptions or closures related to the coronavirus.” Yet, by the end of June, more than 2,800 adjuncts were laid off and 422 adjuncts lost their health insurance, according to information obtained by the union.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-v-CUNY](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-v-CUNY)

**THURSDAY, JULY 2****PSC MEMBERS AND CUNY STUDENTS PROTEST AUSTERITY, RACIST DISINVESTMENT AND ANTI-BLACKNESS AT BROOKLYN COLLEGE.**

Faculty, staff and students protest layoffs of hundreds of adjuncts, including more than 50 adjuncts who rely on health insurance through CUNY.

Link: [tinyurl.com/BC-layoff-rally](https://tinyurl.com/BC-layoff-rally)

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 15****FACULTY AND STAFF FROM CUNY BRONX COLLEGES GATHER TO PROTEST LAYOFFS AND CUTS.**

Outside Bronx Community College and on Zoom, union members from BCC, Lehman College and Hostos Community College protest the layoffs of hundreds of Bronx adjuncts.

Link: [tinyurl.com/Bronx-layoff-rally](https://tinyurl.com/Bronx-layoff-rally)

**SATURDAY, JULY 18****MORE THAN 1,300 MARCH IN PSC CARAVANS IN ALL FIVE BOROUGHS TO CALL FOR A FULLY-FUNDED AND SAFE CUNY AND A HALT TO MASS LAYOFFS.**

More than 500 PSC members in Manhattan join PSC contingents in Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and the Bronx, and more than 750 people via synchronous Zoom protest, stand against the layoffs of nearly 3,000 CUNY adjuncts. Thousands more join on Facebook Live and through social media actions, making the PSC-CUNY protest one of the top trending social media stories in New York City for the day.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-borough-caravans](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-borough-caravans)

**THURSDAY, JULY 23****ON “OWN YOUR ANNUAL LEAVE DAY,” PSC MEMBERS IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR EARNED VACATION DAYS MAKE REQUESTS TO TAKE THE DAYS OFF.**

After mass action by members unable to use their annual leave because of the pandemic, CUNY extends the deadline for use of annual leave for HEOs, CLTs and others.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-letter-CUNY-HR](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-letter-CUNY-HR) (letter to HR directors)

**SATURDAY, JULY 25****THE PSC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ISSUES 10 DEMANDS AND SETS AN AUGUST 26 DEADLINE FOR TALKS WITH CUNY.**

The PSC Executive Council announces a set of 10 demands to be met by CUNY administration by the first day of classes. The demands include involving unions in the university’s reopening plans; full compliance with state, federal and union-negotiated regulations for workplace health and safety; ac-

commodation for employees at serious risk of contracting COVID-19; reinstatement of represented CUNY employees who have been laid off and/or lost their health insurance in 2020 for budgetary or programmatic reasons; real movement in impact bargaining; inclusion of faculty governance bodies, department chairs and the PSC, where appropriate in decisions about curriculum and instruction methods; bargaining over class size; freezing tuition for the academic year and elimination of the “wellness fee”; and a public plan for addressing the health emergency faced by the students.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-ten-demands](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-ten-demands)

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12****A DISTRICT COURT JUDGE DENIES PSC’S MOTION FOR A PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION TO REVERSE THE LAYOFFS OF MORE THAN 2,800 OF CUNY’S PART-TIME FACULTY AND INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF.**

Federal Judge Jed S. Rakoff rules that the CARES Act requirement that educational institutions maintain employees on payroll “to the greatest extent practicable” is not an enforceable right by the affected employees and denies the PSC’s lawsuit to reverse the layoffs during the pandemic of thousands of union members, including adjuncts, continuing education teachers, CUNY Start instructors and CUNY Language Immersion Program instructors.

Link: [tinyurl.com/CARES-Act-lawsuit-opinion](https://tinyurl.com/CARES-Act-lawsuit-opinion)

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 13****IN A SOLEMN ZOOM VIGIL, UNION MEMBERS REMEMBER AND NAME COLLEAGUES LOST DUE TO CORONAVIRUS.**

With an estimated 48 deaths, CUNY earns the unfortunate distinction of being, by some estimates, the university to lose the most lives to the coronavirus epidemic at the time. Union members remember their colleagues.

Link: [tinyurl.com/CUNY-corona-vigil](https://tinyurl.com/CUNY-corona-vigil)

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 18****THE PSC AND CUNY REACH AGREEMENTS ON IMPACT****BARGAINING ISSUES ON SCHEDULING LEAVE AND SABBATICALS, TENURE REVIEW FOR CLTs, AND CERTIFICATE OF CONTINUOUS EMPLOYMENT FOR LECTURERS.**

The union continues to bargain with CUNY around changes to the contract due to the pandemic. CLTs who are candidates for tenure effective September 1, 2020, may receive a one-year extension if they want, and lecturers can defer consideration for CCE (Certificate of Continuous Employment). The deadline to use annual leave for the year ending on 8/31/20 can be extended to 12/31/20 in certain conditions. Faculty who wish to defer their sabbaticals during either or both semesters for the 2020–2021 academic year may do so without having to reapply.

Link: [tinyurl.com/aug-2020-impact-bargaining](https://tinyurl.com/aug-2020-impact-bargaining)

**MONDAY, AUGUST 24****EIGHT MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS WRITE TO CUNY MANAGEMENT WITH DISMAY ABOUT THE MASS ADJUNCT LAYOFFS.**

House members said the money that they secured for CUNY through the CARES Act was meant to keep faculty on the payroll.

Link: [tinyurl.com/congress-members-CUNY-letter](https://tinyurl.com/congress-members-CUNY-letter)

**WEDNESDAY & THURSDAY, AUGUST 26-27, 2020****THOUSANDS PARTICIPATE IN THE PSC “AROUND-THE-CLOCK” 24-HOUR ONLINE ACTION, CELEBRATING UNION WINS FROM #CUNYSUMMEROFSTRUGGLE AND MOBILIZING FOR MILITANT ACTION AHEAD.**

Marking the first day of classes at most CUNY colleges, scores of PSC members and their CUNY allies participate in a 24-hour online marathon action to highlight pressing issues facing the university and celebrate their accomplishments to date.

In video sessions, members and allies discuss a range of issues from historical analysis of CUNY’s chronic underfunding to pressing health and safety issues facing members and campuses during the pandemic to highlights from the union’s #CU-

NYSummerofStruggle. PSC leaders also update members on the status of the union’s 10 demands presented July 25 to CUNY; some of them were partially met and others not at all.

The action ends on a pivotal note: While the union remains committed to all forms of protest against layoffs and unsafe campus reopenings – either in court, in the streets or in lobbying actions – PSC President Barbara Bowen announces that PSC leadership is ready to discuss the possibility of authorizing a future job action. The American Federation of Teachers, the PSC’s national affiliate, says it will support its members who engage in safety strikes by public-sector workers in New York State.

Link: [tinyurl.com/24-hour-action](https://tinyurl.com/24-hour-action)

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 27****PSC HEALTH AND SAFETY WATCHDOGS RELEASE SAFETY PROTOCOL CHECKLISTS FOR CUNY’S PARTIAL REOPENING.**

The union issues guidance and checklists for workers returning to campus on hygiene, ventilation, cleaning and disinfecting protocols, health screenings and testing – including state-mandated health and safety precautions, and filing a complaint with the state. The PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs also raise specific questions to local chapter leaders about existing issues with CUNY buildings and deteriorating infrastructure.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-covid-health-safety](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-covid-health-safety)

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3****UNION MEMBERS ACROSS THE CITY PROTEST THE PROPOSED LAYOFFS OF THOUSANDS OF CITY WORKERS.**

In a rally at Foley Square, union members protest the potential layoffs of more than 20,000 municipal workers to balance the city budget deficit. PSC members attend the rally organized by several local union chapters in DC 37.

Link: [tinyurl.com/NYC-labor-rally](https://tinyurl.com/NYC-labor-rally)

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29****MEMBERS AT HUNTER COLLEGE SCHOOLS, ON THE BRINK OF A STRIKE, WIN AN INDEPENDENT SAFETY INSPECTION AFTER WEEKS OF ORGANIZING AGAINST AN UNSAFE RETURN TO WORK.**

As the K-12 faculty the PSC represents are called back to full-time in-person work, the PSC wins a temporary restraining order against CUNY in State Supreme Court to mandate installation of HEPA air filters in their windowless building. HCCS members had rallied in front of their school building, affectionately known as the “brick prison,” the week before, and they mobilized throughout the summer demanding that they receive the same safety protections as other public school teachers. On the eve of the school’s reopening, CUNY continues to refuse to allow an independent safety inspection of the building. Pressure builds for a safety strike. Hours before the deadline, the strike is averted when CUNY relents and allows an inspection of the building’s ventilation system.

In October, several students and faculty test positive for COVID, and

Continued on page 12





## 15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

### Tell Cuomo: Tax the rich

There's a campaign to pressure the state government to raise taxes on the wealthiest in order to fund CUNY, K-12 schools and vital public services.

The state's 118 billionaires have seen a \$77 billion increase to their personal wealth during the pandemic, while Main Street has experienced job cuts, business closings and service reductions. Unions like the PSC believe now is the time for the rich to pay their fair share. Governor Andrew Cuomo has said he's willing to entertain the idea in 2021.

Go to <https://www.psc-cuny.org/tax-rich> to tell the governor the time for new taxes on the wealthiest is now.

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SPECIAL

Clarion | December 2020

# PSC COVID-19 response

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the PSC again prepares for legal action and mobilization to secure tighter health and safety protocols.

Link: [tinyurl.com/HCCS-victory](https://tinyurl.com/HCCS-victory)

#### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

**PSC MEMBERS PROTEST VIRTUALLY AND IN PERSON AT HUNTER COLLEGE, DEMANDING BUDGET TRANSPARENCY.**

CUNY management signed an agreement in May that they would provide detailed college budget information. It would include information about proposed cuts, enrollment projections and state and city fiscal situations. But CUNY has yet to honor its legal obligation. CUNY administration also has not outlined how federal money received from the CARES Act, \$132 million for institutional support, was spent. Members also protested the mass layoffs of adjuncts and asking workers to report for in-person work without adequate health safety measures.

Link: [tinyurl.com/hunter-budget-rally](https://tinyurl.com/hunter-budget-rally)

#### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22

**THE PSC AND CUNY ISSUE A JOINT STATEMENT, REAFFIRMING THEIR COMMITMENT TO CURB WORKPLACE BULLYING.**

A workplace that is free of harassment and respects the dignity of all students, faculty and staff is a goal for the labor-management joint campaign around workplace bullying. CUNY management committed to a joint campaign as part of the 2017-2023 PSC-CUNY contract.

During the pandemic, workplace bullying has not vanished with members reporting incidents of excessive reporting of work, retaliation for speaking up about increased workload and deliberate isolation from colleagues to carry out work initiatives. In October during National Bullying Prevention month, some PSC members organized dozens of events to highlight the issue and expose the effects of unchecked bullying. At the December 10 delegate assembly meeting, PSC



Jud Guiteau

delegates passed a resolution that would form an ad hoc anti-bullying committee.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-antibullying-resolution](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-antibullying-resolution)

#### THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29

**TWO THOUSAND UNION MEMBERS ATTENDED A PSC MASS ONLINE MEETING, WHERE UNION LEADERS REFLECT AND CHART A PATH FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD.**

CUNY funding, mass adjunct layoffs, anti-racism efforts, reopening safety and November federal and state elections are among the topics in a virtual PSC meeting where union leadership asserts the challenges facing CUNY and PSC members should not be minimized. PSC members are up against serious political and economic power, and one of the essential tasks moving forward is to engage in one-on-one

conversations with every single member in the 30,000 bargaining unit to build solidarity and assess the way forward.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-mass-meeting](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-mass-meeting)

#### MONDAY, NOVEMBER 9

**CUNY DELAYS NOVEMBER 15 CONTRACTUAL RAISES WITH NO CLEAR SIGNAL ON WHEN RAISES WILL GO INTO EFFECT.**

Citing no savings target or plan on when raises will go into effect, CUNY tells PSC leadership that they plan to delay the contractually obligated 2% raises due to PSC members on November 15. The union's own projections estimate that PSC members will lose collectively more than \$800,000 a week and \$3 million a month. CUNY management also announces five-day unpaid furloughs for managers on the executive compensation plan.

PSC President Barbara Bowen calls the furloughs "theater" that will do little to change the budget picture. The union considers filing a class action grievance in response to the raise delay.

Link: [tinyurl.com/CUNY-raise-delay](https://tinyurl.com/CUNY-raise-delay)

#### THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

**PSC DELEGATES AMEND THE PSC CONSTITUTION TO INCLUDE A STANDING ANTI-RACISM COMMITTEE.**

Contributing to "dismantling the structures, practices and ideology of racism" and "achieving racial justice within the City University, the union, the city and beyond" are the mandates of this constitutional committee. The union has had an anti-racism committee in the past, but the constitutional requirement formalizes the committee at a time of systemic police brutality and racist disinvestment of CUNY, a public university system where the majority of students are people of color.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-antiracism-committee](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-antiracism-committee)

#### MONDAY, NOVEMBER 23

**PSC DELEGATES PASS A RESOLUTION AROUND STRIKE READINESS.**

CUNY is one of the university systems in the country most affected by the coronavirus epidemic. The union refuses to "normalize" the conditions caused by this crisis. In a special delegate assembly, PSC delegates committed to an ambitious membership campaign, where members talk to one another and build union power and create strike readiness.

Link: [tinyurl.com/PSC-strike-readiness-resolution](https://tinyurl.com/PSC-strike-readiness-resolution)

#### WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

**MORE THAN 800 PEOPLE ATTEND A CUNY RISING ALLIANCE VIRTUAL TOWN HALL TO DISCUSS "NEW DEAL FOR CUNY," LEGISLATION THAT WOULD REIMAGINE PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN CUNY.**

The PSC, along with community and labor allies, share plans to introduce the New Deal for CUNY bill during

the 2021 state legislative session. The draft legislation has a five-year phase-in and includes free CUNY tuition for in-state undergraduates, more mental health counselors and academic advisors, increasing the ratio of full-time faculty to students, professionalizing adjunct compensation, and investment in critical infrastructure needs.

Link: [tinyurl.com/new-deal-for-CUNY-townhall](https://tinyurl.com/new-deal-for-CUNY-townhall)

#### FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

**HUNDREDS ATTEND THE FORUM, "WE CHARGE GENOCIDE".**

The union's International Committee held a forum, attended by hundreds of people to discuss Paul Robeson's 1951 petition "We Charge Genocide" to the UN that aimed to hold the U.S. government accountable for the atrocities committed against Black people. The forum, featuring scholars from CUNY and around the world, aimed to put the struggle against racism and imperialism in the context of the pandemic.

Link: [tinyurl.com/we-charge-genocide-event](https://tinyurl.com/we-charge-genocide-event)

#### MONDAY, DECEMBER 7

**PSC MEMBERS SUBMIT TESTIMONY TO THE CUNY BOARD OF TRUSTEES ON THE IMPACT OF INCREASED CLASS SIZES ON THEIR TEACHING AND STUDENTS' LEARNING.**

As part of the union's campaign against increases – sometimes dramatic ones – in class size caps, members testified to the CUNY Board on the ill effects of ballooning class sizes. With the support of the PSC and its local chapters, faculty governance bodies at Brooklyn College, Hostos Community College, Kingsborough Community College and the Borough of Manhattan Community College have all passed resolutions on class size caps. The union initiates discussions with department chairs in an effort to ensure that the situation does not become the "new normal" and demands that CUNY bargain over the impact of class size increases as required by New York State law.

Link: [tinyurl.com/class-size-campaign](https://tinyurl.com/class-size-campaign)

For a further list of PSC actions, go to [psc-cuny.org/SaveLivesSaveJobsSaveCUNY](https://psc-cuny.org/SaveLivesSaveJobsSaveCUNY), and to read media coverage about the union's efforts during COVID-19, go to [psc-cuny.org/news-events/psc-news](https://psc-cuny.org/news-events/psc-news).