

Clarion

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



MARCH 2008



PSC PEOPLE

Union U.

Amanda Plumb runs a CUNY program that draws students into unions.

PAGE 8



Dave Sanders

LOW SALARIES HURT CUNY

The PSC asked its members to describe the impact of CUNY's low salaries, and the stories streamed in. Members told of personal hardships – and the damage done to CUNY as an institution by years of uncompetitive pay. Low salaries cause

problems in retaining CUNY faculty, wrote Paula Gannon of Hostos (above), which exacts a cost in student retention and graduation rates. She summed it up this way: "If you want to keep CUNY students, keep CUNY faculty." **PAGES 10-11**

BUDGET

PSC asks Albany for more funds

PSC activists headed to Albany to tell State lawmakers this is the year to do right by New Yorkers and make a serious down payment on CUNY's future. **PAGES 3 & 12**

FAMILY LEAVE

Valentine's Day cards ask action

Union members at 13 campuses asked colleagues and students to send a Valentine's Day card to CUNY management – to support paid family leave. **PAGE 5**

INJURY TO ALL

Adjunct health care is broken

When adjuncts are ill they lose coverage and income at the same time. It's morally wrong and a problem not only for adjuncts, members tell *Clarion*. **PAGES 6-7**



WELFARE FUND

Long-term care plan, Part 2

The Welfare Fund's new long-term care policy is opening to those insured under the previous plan. The new plan has more flexible options. **PAGE 9**

CALENDAR

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26: 6:00 pm / Cross-Campus HEO Chapter meeting. PSC President Barbara Bowen will discuss contract negotiations. At the Graduate Center, 34th St. and 5th Ave., Room C204/205.

SATURDAY, MARCH 29: 9:30 am – 12:30 pm / International Committee meeting. For location and further information, contact Renate Bridenthal, rbriden1@juno.com.

MONDAY, MARCH 31: 3:30 – 5:45 pm / The City Tech PSC Chapter and the union's Open Access Committee hosts an open forum with Graduate Center sociologists Paul Attewell and David Lavin about their new book, *Open Admissions: The Value of Higher Education for the Disadvantaged*. York College sociologist Tania Levey, who contributed to the book, will also be there. At the City Tech Atrium Amphitheater. For more information, contact Bob Cermele, bcermele@citytech.cuny.edu.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1: 6:00 – 8:00 pm / PSC Women's Committee meeting, at the PSC office, 61 Broadway, 15th floor.

APRIL 3 – 4: / Conference on "Academic Freedom in the Age of Permanent Warfare," sponsored by NYU's Frederic Ewen Academic Freedom Center. Speakers include Barbara Bowen, Joan Scott, David Montgomery, Shelia Slaughter, Deborah Almontaser. Free and open to the public. More information at <http://www.nyu.edu/library/bobst/research/tam/ewen.html>.

FRIDAY, APRIL 4: 4:00 pm / "First Friday" Part-time Personnel Committee meeting rescheduled to this date. At the PSC office. For info, e-mail mnewfield@pscmail.org.

MONDAY, APRIL 7: 1:00 pm / PSC Retirees Chapter meeting. Sean Sweeney of Cornell's Global Labor Institute will discuss global warming and the labor movement; all PSC members welcome. In the PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11: 6:00 pm / Labor Goes to the Movies shows *In the Year of the Pig*, by Emile de Antonio (1968). One of the earliest and most innovative documentaries against the Vietnam War. The film uses materials such as a speech by President Johnson and a Pentagon propaganda film to demonstrate a litany of government lies. In the PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor. ID required to enter building.

MONDAY, APRIL 14: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm / TIAA-CREF representative Paul Sullivan will be at the PSC office. Individuals wishing to meet with him, contact his assistant, Trina Holder, at (800) 842-2733 ext. 5796 to set up an appointment.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16: 6:00 pm / PSC Solidarity Committee meeting, at the PSC office.



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

CUNY connection to 'The Great Debaters'

● Readers may be interested to know the historical connection between CUNY and the film *The Great Debaters*, reviewed in the February *Clarion*.

Hobart Sidney Jarrett, a survivor of the Tulsa race riots, was on the legendary Wiley College debate team portrayed in the film. After graduating from Wiley, he studied at Harvard and earned a PhD from Syracuse. Dr. Jarrett taught at Langston University (1937-1949), Bennett College (1949-1961) and finally Brooklyn College (1961-1986) where he was professor of English – the first African-American to become a full professor in Brooklyn College's English Department. He became professor emeritus in 1986 and passed away in 2005.

While at Bennett, Dr. Jarrett was also president of the Greensboro Citizens Association (1959-1961) and served as an adviser to the students who conducted sit-ins at Greens-

boro lunch counters. Hobart Jarrett's wife, professor Gladys W. Jarrett, was a charter faculty member in the library at York College, later serving as York's chief librarian – likely the first African-American woman to hold that position at CUNY. Gladys Jarrett passed away in 2007. The Jarretts were remarkable both in their own careers and as a couple and helped to break down barriers at many institutions over many decades.

John Drobnicki
York College

Any adjunct gains should apply to all

● "Part-timer Proposal," a letter in the February *Clarion*, suggested that some future modest sacrifices by "one-class" instructors could underwrite substantial improvements for "full-time" adjuncts and the union as a whole. A review of the current con-

tract would provide ample evidence that "one-classes" already have given more than one for the Gipper. New channeling of contract improvements to all adjuncts except single-class adjunct instructors simply would expand the gaps of reward within our bargaining unit.

Consider these questions: How many one-class instructors are eligible for negotiated professional development funds? How many solo class instructors are *not* expected to provide weekly office hours, gratis? How many one-class providers, despite longevity and decent evaluations, can even be considered for adjunct conversion lines? How many one-class instructors are eligible to purchase health insurance? Answers: none, none, none and none.

The wage/benefit inequities imposed by CUNY on "full-time" adjuncts are simply heartless; any additional future adjustments negotiated by PSC on behalf of "one-class"

adjuncts that are similar to the current contract disqualifications would be no less than shameless. Like young Oliver, finishing my tiny bowl of gruel, I ask, "Please sir, more" – *not*, "Now what's for dinner?"

James Stothers
John Jay College

PSC Director of Contract Administration Debra Bergen responds:

On the issue of office hours: adjuncts who are assigned a teaching load of six contact hours or more at the same college must be paid for one additional office hour per week outside of their regular workload.

The intent of this provision was to ensure that adjuncts conducting office hours are paid for it. While adjuncts may choose to conduct office hours without pay where they are not eligible contractually, they should not be asked to perform office hours gratis.

PSC-CUNY grant committee

The PSC-CUNY Research Award Program is seeking faculty members to serve on the selection committee for grants in their areas of expertise. Faculty in different disciplines meet to establish guidelines for grant disbursement, form grant review panels, and select grant recipients. You can volunteer to join the University Committee on Research Awards (UCRA), or nominate colleagues. In-service allotment is available to fac-

ulty performing this service (\$6,000 over the three-year term).

The committee is looking for faculty to coordinate the following areas: anthropology; biology; classics; creative writing & English; earth & environmental science; interdisciplinary studies; law, criminal justice & political science; philosophy; physics; urban studies.

Criteria for selection of UCRA members are:

1. evidence of continuing involvement in scholarship;
2. experience in receiving and administering grants and fellowships;
3. representation from a variety of CUNY colleges.

APPLICANTS WANTED

Applicants are recommended by the UFS Research Committee and appointed by the chancellor. Chairpersons, executive officers and per-

sonnel on the executive pay plan are not eligible. Candidates may hold a PSC-CUNY award at the time of their appointment, but may not apply for an award during their three-year service on the UCRA.

Nominees should forward a curriculum vitae including grants and fellowships received and research undertaken to: The Research Committee, University Faculty Senate, 535 East 80th Street, New York, NY 10075. Or e-mail this information to Stasia.Pasela@mail.cuny.edu. Closing date is April 30. For more information, call the UFS at (212) 794-5538.

PSC supports striking teachers



PSC delegates, at their February meeting, passed a resolution supporting Puerto Rican teachers, who have been on strike since February 21. The teachers have worked under an expired contract for more than two years and seek better conditions in their classrooms as well as improvements to their salaries and health benefits.

Public workers' strikes are illegal in Puerto Rico and the government has come down hard on the teachers – a move the PSC denounced. Above, supporters of the striking teachers rallied outside a Puerto Rican government office in Midtown Manhattan on March 4.

Union theater outing

On April 6, a group organized by the PSC Retirees Chapter will attend the 3:00 matinee of "Our Dad Is In Atlantis" (April 4 to 20) at the Working Theater. Artists involved in the creation of the play will host a discussion afterwards. The show is at 45 Bleeker Street.

The play is a funny, tender story of two brothers left in Mexico after their widowed father leaves for the US to find work as well as a poignant drama about the politically charged issues of immigration.

The Working Theater has been NYC's labor theater for the last 22 years.

Tickets are \$19 for union members. Checks to "The Working Theater" can be mailed to Steve Leberstein c/o PSC, 61 Broadway, 15th floor, New York, NY 10006, by March 21. (After March 21, get tickets directly from www.theworkingtheater.org) Wear a PSC contract button and look for us at the show! – SL

PSC: invest in CUNY now

By PETER HOGNESS

PSC activists were in Albany on February 25 and 26, lobbying legislators to provide CUNY with the funds it needs and urging them to restore proposed cuts to the University's budget.

In December, Governor Spitzer's Commission on Higher Education put a spotlight on the damage to CUNY and SUNY from years of chronic underfunding. And the governor's State of the State address emphasized the need for new investment in higher education – but his 2008-2009 budget proposal did not. Instead, the executive budget called for some cuts to CUNY's budget and would not cover all mandatory cost increases.

CUTS

"Although we are very happy that Governor Spitzer has prioritized higher education, we are disappointed that the current budget proposal does not reflect this emphasis," said Iris DeLutro, the PSC's vice president for cross-campus units. "A future endowment for CUNY and SUNY is a good idea, but CUNY and SUNY can't wait – so the PSC is calling for restoration of budget cuts this year."

The PSC lobbying delegation split up into different teams, meeting with several Senate and Assembly members at the same time. "The legislators we spoke with were sympathetic and interested but unwilling to commit themselves yet," said Peter Jonas, a retiree officer on the PSC Executive Council. "They were awaiting the results of negotiations over to

Members lobby State Legislature



From left: PSC First Vice President Steve London, PSC Communications Coordinator Dorothee Benz and Brooklyn College Associate Professor Alex Vitale with Senator Eric Adams.

tal amount of money that would be available," he said, with those figures expected in mid-March.

KEY TIME

This means, Jonas said, that now is a key time for PSC members to contact their representatives (see page 12). "I would encourage every member to go to the Act Now page on the PSC website and send a message about the budget

to Albany," he said. "This is a critical time for them to hear from us."

"We need to let everyone know that education cannot be the place where you disinvest," said DeLutro. "Higher education is the economic engine for New York's future, and it gives a good bang for the buck." She noted that her campus, Queens College, opened during the Great Depression. "We can't afford a 'zero year,'" DeLutro

said. "We've been under-funded for far too long."

Earlier in the month, more than two dozen PSC members gave testimony at a February 8 hearing on the Commission on Higher Education's report, held by the Higher Education Committee of the State Assembly.

Some members focused on issues of student support and access. Gloria Garcia, director of the SEEK program at College of Staten Island, said that disadvantaged students need an expansion of counseling resources at CUNY. She called for additional counseling lines, to reduce the 200:1 student/counselor ratio in some SEEK programs to more realistic levels. (See also the sidebar at right on PSC priorities.)

ALARMING

Dillona Lewis, co-director of the Welfare Rights Initiative at Hunter, called attention to a part of the commission's initial report that has not received much discussion. "The commission has an alarming recommendation for a college readiness program 'separate from college,'" Lewis said. This "has the potential to create a barrier for disadvantaged students by taking remediation out of community colleges," which she warned would be harmful to student retention.

Other PSC members called for more full-time lines, equity for part-time faculty and staff, investment in new facilities, and restoring CUNY salaries to competitive levels, as well as stating clear opposition to any policy of regular increases in tuition.

PSC's priorities in Albany

Below is a list of the State budget and legislative priorities the PSC is advocating this year:

Support full funding of CUNY's operating and capital budget request with public dollars.

Restore the proposed cuts in the Executive Budget for State aid to community colleges, and **increase New York State's aid to community colleges** by an additional \$250 per full-time equivalent student (FTE).

Fully fund a plan to recruit and retain faculty: This year add new full-time teaching positions at CUNY for a net gain of 500, to begin making real progress toward restoring full-time faculty. A significant number of new full-time faculty lines should be dedicated to long-serving part-time faculty.

Support doctoral student employees by providing health insurance coverage: Unlike SUNY and almost every other university in the country, CUNY does not provide health insurance to doctoral students. In order to continue recruiting the best candidates nationally, CUNY must provide health insurance.

Expand mental health counseling for students: There is an average of one licensed mental health counselor for every 5,000 general population students at CUNY senior colleges, well below the ratio recommended by the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS) of one to 1,500 students.

Secure unemployment insurance for part-time faculty: Some adjunct faculty who are unemployed between semesters are barred from collecting unemployment insurance. Like any other employees who work part-time or irregularly, adjunct faculty need unemployment insurance to get through the period when they have no income.

Increase support for students: Support the proposal in the Executive Budget for no tuition increase. Expand student services. Support TAP reform: expand part-time TAP and make it available to more students and advance critically needed reforms to cover independent students equitably.

Part-timer unemployment bills for NY

By MARCIA NEWFIELD

A.2515 and S.4845. Remember those numbers. They are the PSC-initiated bills in the New York Assembly and State Senate for unemployment insurance for CUNY and SUNY adjuncts.

Today it is difficult for CUNY adjuncts to receive unemployment compensation. In order to prevent full-time K-12 teachers from collecting unemployment compensation during the summer, federal law states that educational employees cannot receive unemployment benefits between semesters if they have "reasonable assurance" of future employment.

'REASONABLE'?

The definition of "reasonable assurance" is left to the states. CUNY claims that the reappointment letters it sends to adjuncts should qualify as a statement of "reasonable assurance." The problem for CUNY adjuncts is that these are only let-

PSC & NYSUT working for reform

ters of *intent*, with no real guarantee of a job the next semester. The job, as stated in the reappointment letter, is contingent on enrollment, budget and programmatic needs. Adjuncts often learn at the last minute that their class has been cut.

The New York legislation supported by the PSC would give a firmer definition of "reasonable assurance," so that CUNY cannot use a highly contingent offer to categorically exclude adjuncts from collecting unemployment compensation. A.2515 and S.4845 were developed by New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and are sponsored by the Labor Committee chairs of the New York Assembly and State Senate, Assemblywoman Susan John and State Senator Tom Maziarz.

This reform was first proposed by the PSC several years ago, with

strong backing from NYSUT and has repeatedly received support from many legislators. The PSC has worked to build a broad state-wide coalition in support of unemployment insurance for adjuncts that now includes other public higher education unions and the New York State AFL-CIO. These bills have consistently been opposed by CUNY and SUNY, which claim that the cost of paying unemployment benefits would be excessive for the universities, which are self-insurers.

CUNY & SUNY exaggerate the cost of doing right by adjuncts.

"Our research indicates that CUNY and SUNY have significantly exaggerated the potential cost," said Steve London, the PSC's first vice president. "Their estimates amount to scare tactics. Under the proposed legislation, CUNY would have some obligation to pay unemployment in-

surance, but only a modest amount. As a responsible employer, CUNY should not maintain it has the flexibility to deny employment to adjuncts at the last minute and also challenge adjuncts' right to unemployment insurance when they are not working. In California and Washington state, similar laws have been passed that see to it that universities cannot engage in such practices."

PSC activists are lobbying in Albany in support of A.2515 and S.4845 and will be visiting legislators in their local offices. (To stay informed about what you can do, sign up for the union's weekly e-mail newsletter at www.psc-cuny.org.)

APPLY

In the meantime, the union is encouraging adjuncts to apply for unemployment benefits under the current law, despite its ambiguity. While these claims are often challenged by CUNY, some adjuncts have filed claims that were successful. In addition, many who are chal-

lenged by CUNY and subsequently appeal have been able to convince administrative law judges that CUNY's letters of appointment do not provide true "reasonable assurance" as defined by law.

Jon Bloom, Director of the Workers Defense League, an organization that helps workers with unemployment insurance issues, will present a workshop on unemployment for adjuncts on May 9, from 4 to 6 pm at the PSC Union Hall.

Unified faculty voice at LaGuardia

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Last month, faculty leaders at LaGuardia Community College won access for all faculty to an invitation-only campus meeting with Chancellor Matthew Goldstein. "It's a big victory," said PSC Chapter Chair Lorraine Cohen. "We succeeded because of the unity between the governance leaders and the union."

The change came after Cohen and other faculty leaders sent an open letter to Goldstein and LaGuardia President Gail Mellow over the college's e-mail system, expressing dismay that the February 20 meeting was limited to "a carefully tailored invitation list that initially included, in addition to administrators and faculty chairs, only untenured assistant professors."

EXCLUSION

"It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that senior faculty, including the chair of the LaGuardia chapter of the Professional Staff Congress, have been deliberately excluded from the invitation list to avoid the airing of any but good news about the college," wrote LaGuardia Faculty Council Chair Sally Mettler, College Senate Chair Lynne Teplin, PSC Chapter Chair Cohen, and Lenore Beaky, Vice Chair of the University Faculty Senate (UFS). The letter deplored "the exclusion of faculty voices, whether of union leaders or senior faculty, who may ask hard or critical questions."

Cohen told *Clarion* that the closed meeting "was seen as a continuation of the silencing of the union and of the faculty," embodied in President Mellow's ban on union communication over LaGuardia's e-mail system, announced last semester. LaGuardia PSC members have petitioned Mellow to withdraw the ban, and the PSC has filed both a grievance and a First Amendment lawsuit to overturn it. (See coverage in the January *Clarion* at www.pscunyc.org/Clarion/LAGCCfree_speech.pdf.)

MEETING

The day after the open letter was sent, Mellow wrote back to say that the session with Goldstein would now be open. She later invited the four faculty leaders to meet with her on March 18 to discuss college communications.

Mellow's response, however, also sought to justify the initial restrictions. "Dr. Goldstein's visit is an opportunity to hear firsthand his vision for the University," Mellow wrote. "We therefore primarily invited all faculty who had been hired over the past several years.... Many of them have not had that privilege."

Underlying the disagreement, Cohen said, are two competing visions for CUNY and LaGuardia. "We want a democratic, open discussion. We don't want it to be a controlled discussion," she told *Clarion*. "Ex-

Letter pushes president to open meeting



PSC Chapter Chair Lorraine Cohen and Danny Lynch, a member of the Chapter Executive Committee, at LaGuardia.

cluding senior faculty was the president's effort to create a meeting where she had control over the agenda."

Beaky, who teaches English at LaGuardia, first learned of Goldstein's planned visit last fall, at a CUNY-wide meeting of governance leaders. "I waited for some notice or publicity, and none came," she told *Clarion*. She asked Mettler and Teplin whether they had heard about the meeting; they hadn't, she said. When she asked the chancellor's office for an update, she learned that she and other senior faculty simply weren't on the invitation list. "I don't want to say that they sat around and said, 'let's exclude,'" Beaky said. "But it's hard to avoid the conclusion that we were excluded."

DISMAY

"We all felt somewhat dismayed," Mettler told *Clarion*. "If you're going to get to know what's going on, you're going to want to hear from some of the tenured people who can speak more openly." The open letter pointed out that meetings with Goldstein this year at many other campuses had been open to all.

After Beaky's inquiry, the open letter noted, "belated invitations" went to Beaky, Mettler and Teplin.

But all union leaders and the rest of the tenured faculty were still not invited, deepening the impression that college administration aimed to marginalize the union and avoid a wide-open discussion.

DISCOMFORT

"I was surprised to learn that the meeting was invitation only," said one junior faculty member who asked to remain anonymous. "I was extremely uncomfortable as a result. Given the fact that I am renewed every year, I really don't have the freedom to speak openly or even comment on what's going on," the faculty member told *Clarion*.

Faculty express dismay and discomfort – and see change.

"And in speaking with other junior faculty in my department, I learned that it was very uncomfortable not just for me. I really appreciated the letter" that the four leaders sent.

When the February 20 meeting finally took place, faculty leaders said, the dialogue with the chancellor covered many topics and was constructive and respectful. "We four being there meant that some questions got raised that would not have otherwise been raised," Mettler told *Clarion*, "because junior faculty are not in the position to raise them or sometimes are not

even aware of the issues. The department chairs were there as advocates for their departments, and so they are not as free to raise issues as we are."

Cohen and other governance leaders said they are cautiously optimistic about the March 18 meeting with Mellow to discuss communications. "I don't know whether it will resolve the [e-mail] question," Mettler said, but "a meeting with us is certainly a good start." Whatever happens with the administration, they plan to continue working in coordination – and that, too, is a victory for LaGuardia faculty and staff, they said.

ACTION

"It is definitely true that it's easier to work with the administration when the faculty and staff are united through the union, governance, senate," Mettler said. "I'm very confident that a like-minded and coordinated effort will continue." Beaky concurred, adding, "This is an opportunity to further our cooperation."

"It's not just about this one event," said Cohen. "It shows that when faculty and staff speak out, when they make it clear that they are going to take action, when they know that something is being done to them and they organize against it, something can happen."

LABOR IN BRIEF

UUP elects new leader

On February 9, the delegates of the SUNY faculty and staff union, United University Professions, elected Phillip H. Smith as the union's new president. Last year, former president William Scheuerman left the top position to head the National Labor College in Maryland.

The election was the first contested race since 1991; delegates chose Smith over acting President Fred Floss, who served as UUP's chief negotiator in the last contract round.

Smith is a biology professor and a former UUP academic vice president who headed contract talks in 2003-2007. He campaigned on a platform of transparency, the civil service weekly *The Chief* reported.

"I want to open up the process," Smith told the paper. He also plans to develop new leaders, reimagine the union's publications and continue the previous administration's political priorities.

AFT heads to step down

On February 12, AFT President Edward J. McElroy and Secretary-Treasurer Nat LaCour announced their retirement as of this July. They have held office since 2004.

McElroy was a social studies and English teacher in Warwick, RI before he became president of the state's teachers federation and the Rhode Island AFL-CIO at 30 years of age.

Before helping lead the AFT, LaCour was president of United Teachers of New Orleans (UTNO), an AFT affiliate, for 28 years. Under his leadership, UTNO won the first union contract with a local school district in the South in 1974.

In July, AFT delegates will elect a new president at the union's convention in Chicago. *The New York Times* reported that Randi Weingarten, head of the UFT, is "widely expected" to be McElroy's successor.

Child care workers unionize

In February, some 17,000 New York State home-based child care workers voted overwhelmingly to unionize with the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA). The new CSEA members voted 96% for the union. As a result, the CSEA now represents 25,000 home-based child care providers outside the city. In October, 28,000 NYC providers voted for the UFT.

The workers are organizing unions after Gov. Eliot Spitzer's May executive order granted them the right to form unions.

The CSEA listed pay, on-time payments and the delivery of county funds as the main concerns of their new members.

The union said the election was one of the largest ever conducted by the Public Employment Relations Board.

CSEA member wins on marriage equality

By CANDICE JOHNSON

Monroe CC must give benefits to lesbian spouse

On February 1, a State appeals court ordered Monroe Community College in Rochester to recognize the marriage of college employee Patricia Martinez and her spouse, Lisa Ann Golden. The ruling held that same-sex marriages performed out of state must be officially recognized in New York.

"My spouse and I are thrilled beyond words with the decision," said Martinez, who brought the suit against the college. "This is a historic, precedent-setting ruling that will change the landscape of marriage in New York State. It will also change the way everyone looks at marriage." The court's decision applies to all employers in New York, both public and private.

Martinez, a member of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), said members of her local have been extremely supportive. "The reaction from my co-workers

and colleagues has been nothing less than amazing," she told *Clarion*. "For the past two weeks, since the release of the ruling, staff and faculty alike have stopped by my office, called, or e-mailed me with congratulatory messages," she said. "While some may not understand the magnitude of the decision, they simply believe it's the right thing for same-sex couples. What an amazing environment I work in!"

HISTORIC

In July 2004 Martinez and Golden were married in Canada, where same-sex marriages are recognized under the law. Within a week, the newlywed Martinez applied to get health care benefits for Golden from her employer, Monroe Community College (MCC), where she is a word-processing supervisor. Five months

later, the then-head of the college's human resources department denied her application, on the grounds that New York State law does not recognize same-sex marriage.

Equal recognition for LGBT workers

The lawsuit, filed in 2006, was initially dismissed. But the appellate court found in Martinez and Golden's favor, citing New York's long-standing "marriage recognition rule." For the past century, courts have repeatedly found if a marriage is legally valid where it was performed, it must be recognized in New York State.

The county has said it will appeal the decision to New York's highest court. "I'm looking forward to our day in court and getting this issue settled statewide once and for all," Martinez said.

The CSEA local at MCC was not involved in the lawsuit but negotiat-

ed to add domestic partner benefits to its contract after the case was filed. MCC's Faculty Association, which is affiliated with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), has had domestic partner benefits in its contract since 2004. (PSC members have had domestic partner benefits since the 1990s.)

VALIDATION

"This decision was a good one and certainly is a step in the right direction for marriage equality in New York State," said Bethany Gizzi, the Faculty Association's grievance chair. The ruling "will ensure that all MCC employees now have the right to have their marriages recognized," Gizzi told *Clarion*. The effort to win full marriage equality at both State and federal levels is important, she said, because "domestic partner benefits do

not provide the vast array of rights and benefits that marriage does."

The LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) labor group, Pride at Work, also expressed its support. "The Martinez decision has implications for every same-sex household in New York," said Bess Watts, president of the Rochester Pride at Work chapter. "It means workplace equity in terms of health insurance for spouses and children, family and bereavement leave, and survivor benefits. But the subtler, equally significant impact of recognizing same-sex marriages is the validation of gay and lesbian employees as full and equal members in the workplace."

"It is a shame that the Monroe County administration has such a myopic, provincial perspective that they would appeal this historic decision," added Watts. On February 25, more than 200 people rallied in downtown Rochester to protest the decision to appeal.

Valentine actions for paid family leave

CUNY faculty and staff sent CUNY management a lot of cards this Valentine's Day. The cards support the PSC's bargaining position for paid time off to care for new or ill family members, saying, "CUNY,

stop breaking our hearts! Give us time with our families!"

Union activists and their children have gathered more than four thousand postcards from members and students.



At Queens College, young activists organize Professor Hester Eisenstein's support.



When PSC Executive Committee member Nancy Romer asked Brooklyn College students for their support, they lined up to fill out cards.



Brooklyn College students, staff and faculty asked CUNY to have a heart.



"Wouldn't paid family leave be sweet?" asked Bronx Community College activists.



Queens College political science faculty Keena Lipsitz (and Rica) and Julie George (and Amelia) explain the total lack of paid family leave for CUNY faculty and staff to a student.

Campus contract meetings with chairs and HEOs

By PETER HOGNESS

Contract organizing this semester has featured campus meetings with department chairs and Higher Education Officers and a high-visibility campaign for paid family leave.

Geraldine Ruiz, chair of allied health sciences at Hostos, went to a February 20 meeting at the college between department chairs and union leaders. The session was well-attended, she told *Clarion*, with a majority of department chairs taking part.

"We were unanimous in our feelings toward having chairs removed from the PSC," said Ruiz. "We're against it."

"I think of myself first and foremost as a faculty member," said Robert Cohen, chair of the department of language and cognition. "We are kind of a bridge between faculty and administration. We represent our faculty, and I think that if we were to become managers *only*, we would lose that special rapport."

"If that did happen, why would someone *be* a chair?" asked Ruiz. "It can be a thankless job. You're called on to do so much. We do what we do because we love it – and other than that, there's not much incentive."

UNANIMOUS

Another topic was management's proposal to eliminate salary steps, and replace them with raises given at the discretion of the college president. "We're totally opposed to that," said Ruiz. "With salary as it is, it's very difficult for us to recruit. To take away the steps would make it so much worse."

Ruiz said that her department constantly has open lines that are difficult to fill due to low salaries. "We have openings in dental hygiene and we can't fill them," she said. "We had an opening in radiologic technology – it took us three years to get our first application! They want us to address the dire shortage in nursing, but we can't increase the enrollment if we can't get the faculty." Eliminating the step system, she said, "would be another blow to us in terms of trying to recruit."

Meetings with department chairs were also held at City College, Hunter and Lehman in February, and were planned for Queensborough and Medgar Evers in March.

OUTREACH

Valentine's Day saw protest and outreach at 13 CUNY campuses on the issue of paid family leave, which CUNY currently does not offer. "CUNY, Stop Breaking Our Hearts!" was the slogan on postcards that faculty, staff and students were asked to sign; a total of 4,200 cards were collected. (See photos, page 5.)

Still no money offer from CUNY



HEOs at John Jay met in February to talk about contract negotiations.

At York, HEOs and faculty members worked together on the outreach project, said union delegate Steve Barrera. "It was such a success on Valentine's Day that we had another day too," he told *Clarion*. "We collected more than 250 postcards each day."

Hunter Chapter Chair Mike Perina said that even after the tabling was over, "word had spread and people kept coming back to us, asking, 'Can I have a card? Do you still have those cards?'"

Paid family leave also drew support in the department chair meetings. Last semester at Queens, department chairs wrote to the college administration, voicing concern that the lack of paid leave at CUNY was damaging to retention and recruitment.

During February, HEOs met about the contract fight at Baruch, CCNY, the Graduate Center, Hostos, Hunter, John Jay, Queens and York.

KEY CONCERNS

Douglas Medina, a higher education associate, said that at the Baruch meeting, a key concern was getting CUNY's demands for concessions off the negotiating table. "This time, management seems to be going for the whole shebang, eroding the limited job security we have for HEOs," he said. "We're very concerned about that."

On the positive side, he said, professional staff are very interested in paid family leave. "One of the people who attended just had a baby," Medina said. "She'd been appalled to find out that while she could take time off, she wouldn't get paid."

Janet Winter, who works in institutional advancement at John Jay, said that HEOs on her campus discussed tuition reimbursement for family members, as well as HEO job security "and, of course, money increases."

It was a big meeting, Winter said, with more than 50 HEOs attending. "We are well organized," she said. "People came to the rally, and everyone stays in touch. So we are strong supporters [of the union], and we're going to stay involved." They discussed a contract-related petition as their next step, she said.

AT THE TABLE

At the negotiating table, CUNY has still made no economic offer after more than six months of negotiations – despite settlements earlier this year between New York State and its largest employee unions.

In response, said PSC President Barbara Bowen, "We have told CUNY management we see no point in holding another formal bargaining session until they are prepared to give us an economic proposal. And we're pressing them not just to come to us with any offer, but with a *good* offer."

In the meantime, union and management representatives have held smaller side meetings on specific issues, she told the February 28 Delegate Assembly, such as family leave and equity issues. "Each individual issue may take a four-hour meeting, then another two-hour meeting, then another four-hour session," she said. "But we are looking to make progress on outstanding issues wherever we can."

At CUNY, adj

By DANIA RAJENDRA

When "Melissa Klein" (not her real name) needed a kidney transplant, she lucked out – her sister was a perfect match. Klein teaches in the English department at a CUNY community college, and her doctors forbade her from returning to the classroom for three months. Because she's on huge doses of immuno-suppressive drugs, she explained, "if someone is sick, I'll get it very quickly and have nothing to fight it off."

But for health insurance, Klein was out of luck. As a CUNY adjunct, not teaching meant that she lost both her health coverage and her income, right in the middle of a medical crisis.

"I was forced to borrow money to pay for COBRA," the federally mandated unemployed workers' option to continue their health coverage, she told *Clarion*. "There is no money coming in. Honestly, I don't know how I'm going to manage on my husband's paycheck alone."

NO BANK

Adjuncts have only limited leave for illness or emergency – generally a maximum of one or two days per semester. They cannot accumulate leave from one semester to the next – no matter how many years they have worked for CUNY. If they are dropped from the payroll, they can pay to maintain their health coverage under COBRA, but it is expensive – about \$500 to \$700 a month for an individual, \$1,200 to \$1,800 for a family. An underpaid adjunct who suddenly has no paycheck may find that she or he can't afford it.

Klein has taught at CUNY – at the same college – for five years. She loves helping her students learn to read, she told *Clarion*. "I like turning around students who have had difficulty their whole lives with reading and writing. I love to make an unsuccessful student into a success." She hopes to return to her students in the Fall and is counting on her good rapport with her department to have her courses assigned to her again, she said.

"I've worked so hard and given so much to the system, but financially I'm receiving nothing back," she said.

BROKEN LEG

Janet Gonzalez tells a similar story. Last January, Gonzalez broke her leg. An adjunct lecturer, she has usually taught two chemistry courses at Lehman and one at BCC, ever since 2001 when she began her PhD at the Graduate Center. Because she was injured during intercession, she told *Clarion*, she was able to alert her department chairs in time for a replacement to be found. Since Gonzalez was still on the payroll when she fell, her health insurance covered the initial doctor's visit – and the cast that extended from her toe to her knee. But by the date of

Inequity hurts fu

her follow-up appointment, her insurance had been cancelled.

Suddenly without an income, Gonzalez had only her student loan and money borrowed from family and friends. COBRA was unaffordable, so she paid her regular visits to the doctor out of pocket, at \$175 each, and hoped that she wouldn't develop complications. By the end of the semester, she was deep in debt.

DEBT

"I'm still paying back people," she told *Clarion*. "But, I'm born and raised here and I have family here. Imagine if I were an immigrant – who would lend me \$3,000 then?"

After Gonzalez's cast came off in April, she recalled, "I still couldn't walk." Her doctor prescribed physical therapy, which she couldn't afford. With no PT, she tried to fill the gap by doing exercises that her doctor had described. In July, still frail, she went back to teach her classes at Lehman. "I had a cane, and I was walking really slowly," she said. "I would get up really early so I could get on the train really early, so I could get a seat and no



Afraid to take one day off for this broken arm

one would step on my foot." By the time she requalified for health insurance, "It was too late for physical therapy," she said. "My leg didn't start feeling well until November or December. Sometimes I still limp."

When Walter Dufresne broke his arm in November, he had already taken his one day of leave for illness that semester – the first time he had used that benefit in 19 years of teaching photography at City Tech. "I broke my arm on a Friday, taught my Monday class and turned around and got my surgery Wednesday," he recalled. He was afraid to miss even one class.

Adjunct health care is broken

Full-timers, too

"I was worried that my coverage would be discontinued if I stopped teaching," he told *Clarion*. Calling in sick for half a semester "would have left my department in a very tough position. That's impolitic for someone who doesn't have job security."

"I have 10 years full-time service equivalence over the last 19 years, and I've got no banked sick time at all," said Dufresne, an adjunct assistant professor. "I feel like a character in a Dickens novel."

Dufresne guessed he'd be on the upswing once his arm was in a cast – but he was wrong. "The worst of it was all the immobility after the bone surgery," he said. "I tend to use my body a lot in teaching – I teach a four-contact-hour course, with one hour of lecture and three hours of laboratory, recital and studio." E-mail contact between classes was also difficult. "Typing one-handed was ridiculous," explained Dufresne. Usually he's as voluble online as he is in person – but with a broken arm, students got less feedback. "In talking with students via e-mail," he said, "all my loquaciousness went away."

He said he's recovering some mobility now, but progress is slow. "I would have loved to have taken the time off, to work even harder on my recovery," he said.

So would "Annie Post" (who asked that *Clarion* not use her real name). An adjunct who has taught at two CUNY campuses since 1982, Post is in her 60s and has chronic hepatitis C, a potentially life-threatening condition that can cause cirrhosis and liver cancer.

For most of her decades at CUNY, Post has taught two courses at one CUNY campus and one at another. In 2003, she needed chemotherapy, and as a concession to the punishing regimen she gave up one class. She needed to teach at least six credit hours a semester to continue her eligibility for health insurance (non-teaching adjuncts must work 10 hours to qualify).

"I was terrified that I wouldn't be able to work, and that I would lose my health insurance," she said. "Treatment cost \$700 a week." So she kept on working. Post remembered that during her treatments, "I was so tired, I used to fall against the desk."

In 2005, Post repeated the whole process and again had to drop her third class. For the other two, to cover the days she couldn't make it into the classroom, she lined up substitutes for herself – and paid them out of her own pocket.

Today she's doing better but is still not well, and her doctors have made

it clear she'd do better with more rest. But she has to keep teaching, she told *Clarion*: "I wish right now I could take off to get better, but then I would have to pay for COBRA, and I can't afford it. I'm 60, and I'm not even talking about retirement. I can't retire."

Unlike full-time faculty and staff, when adjuncts retire they take no health insurance with them – their CUNY coverage simply ends. For

'I feel like a character in a Dickens novel.'

those 65 or older, Medicare can serve as a safety net, but it's a costly option just as their income drops: the added expenses for prescription drugs, hospitalization deductibles, or the Medicare Part B premium can add up to thousands of dollars. Eligible retired full-timers have these expenses covered through their City health coverage; retired part-timers do not.

"You can't afford to retire," explained Linda Caspe, an adjunct at BMCC who has taught at CUNY for 34 years. "You're retiring on very little money – \$4,000, maybe \$10,000 a year. I'm going to work forever."

Part-timers come up short on family health insurance coverage as well. While full-timers get it at no extra charge, part-timers must pay \$700 to \$1,000 per month for family coverage.

NOT ON CITY PLAN

Unlike full-time faculty and staff – and unlike almost all other part-time City employees – CUNY adjuncts are not given health coverage under the New York City Health Benefits Program. Other part-time City workers are entitled to insurance under the City health plan if they work at least half of their agency's regular work week, whether that is 20 hours or 17%. "It would be easy to make a similar determination for our adjuncts, for whom six credits a semester represents half of the average courseload," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "And CUNY employs one of the largest numbers of part-time workers among public employers in New York City."

Faced with the lack of health insurance for CUNY's growing army of adjuncts, the PSC and CUNY agreed in the late 1980s to provide health insurance through the Welfare Fund for adjuncts who work half-time or more and negotiated a lump-sum contribution from CUNY to cover the cost. Since then CUNY has greatly increased the number of adjuncts and the cost of health insurance has skyrocketed. While the PSC has won increases to the employer contribution in recent contracts, the contribution has not kept pace with increased costs to the Welfare Fund.

Along with increased salaries for all, the PSC has identified inclusion of CUNY adjuncts in the City health

plan as a priority in the current round of collective bargaining. "When we think about the national scandal of 45 million Americans uninsured, how many of us realize that some of those uninsured are teaching in CUNY classrooms?" asked Bowen. "It makes no sense pedagogically – let alone ethically – to expect people to teach when they are sick."

EVERYBODY'S ISSUE

"This is everybody's issue, not just the adjuncts," she added. "CUNY's failure to provide regular health insurance for adjuncts and graduate employees is just one more way they save money on our backs. Because CUNY does not contribute the real cost of adjunct health insurance and just keeps adding more adjuncts without increasing payments, the Welfare Fund is, in effect, subsidizing CUNY." Transferring eligible adjuncts to the City health plan would provide them with stable coverage and would strengthen the financial stability of the Fund as a whole, Bowen said, which is to everyone's benefit.

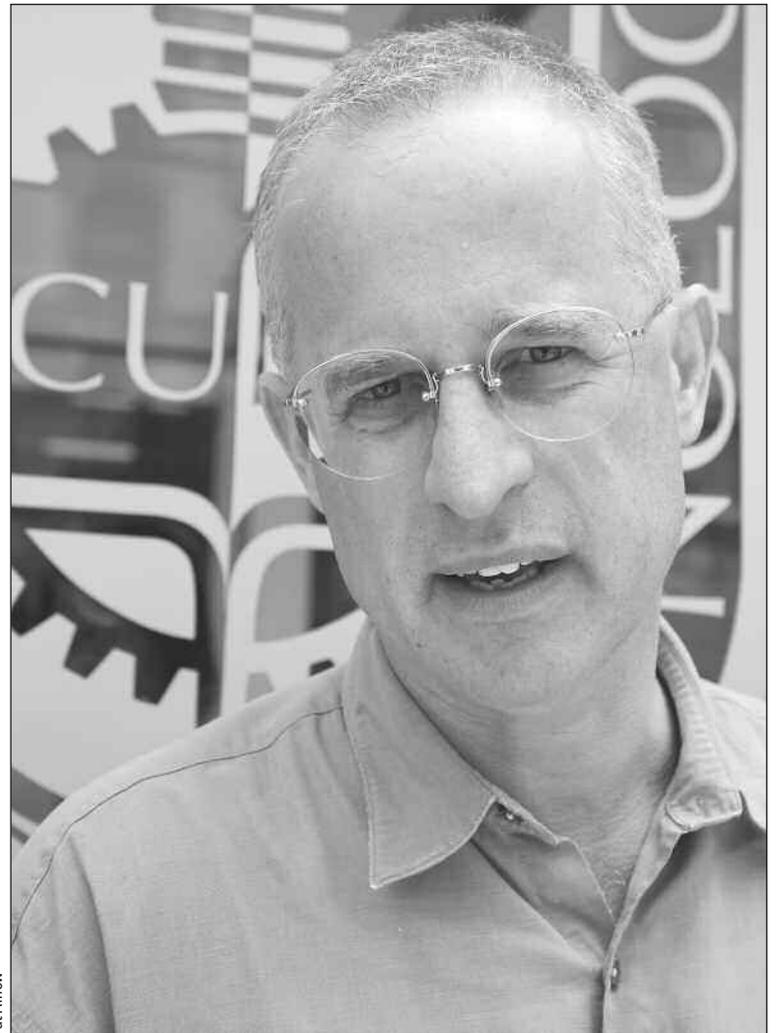
The fear of losing coverage too often does lead adjuncts to work while sick or injured. "Part-time employees should not go off payroll as soon as they have been absent for more than one or two days," said Marcia Newfield, PSC vice president for part-time personnel, "and this needs to be addressed in a number of ways." In addition to demanding that adjuncts be brought onto the regular City health plan, in the current contract negotiations the union has also proposed creation of a "sick leave bank," through which members could voluntarily contribute sick days that would be used by others.

GRADUATE EMPLOYEES

While adjuncts' health benefits are worse than full-timers' coverage in many ways, graduate assistants have it even worse: CUNY pays nothing for their health insurance coverage. CUNY graduate employees must pay the entire cost themselves, and only very limited coverage is offered.

Graduate students who teach on an adjunct line may qualify for paid health insurance coverage. But if they do the same kind of work on a graduate assistant line, they won't. As a result, many walk around with no coverage, hoping for the best. When they have a serious problem, they fall back on emergency-room care and underfunded public hospitals.

While the vast majority of US universities – including SUNY – provide health insurance to graduate students who teach, CUNY does not. "As every executive officer and faculty member at the Graduate Center knows only too well, the failure to provide comprehensive, affordable health insurance for doctoral stu-



Walter Dufresne has taught at City Tech for 19 years.

dents jeopardizes the reputation of CUNY by compromising its programs' ability to recruit candidates," said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, who is executive officer of CUNY's doctoral program in social welfare.

Sean Murray is a student in CUNY's doctoral program in musicology, considered one of the best in the country. "This semester, I declined my teaching fellowship in order to impoverish myself to qualify for Medicaid," Murray told *Clarion*. It was, he determined, the only way he could get medical care while he was uninsured.

"It is not my illness which is inhibiting my progress, it is dealing with the medical bills," said Anna Nugent, a doctoral student in molecular biology. Nugent has lupus, and bought a bare-bones health insurance policy when she began her doctoral studies at CUNY. Unfortunately, she said, it hasn't covered any of her accumulated expenses, even after she spent 15 hours or more a week fighting with the bureaucracy. "I know my health was made worse by the stresses of being behind in my program, getting bills for hundreds, even thousands" of dollars, she told *Clarion*. "The current situation at CUNY essentially means that an individual with my disability cannot do a PhD here."

Murray said that his decision to turn down his teaching fellowship is "jeopardizing my education and academic career," but he concluded it was a necessary decision if he

was going to get the health care that he needs. "The decision not to provide insurance to CUNY graduate students...saves public coffers no money, for in the end the City and the State foot the bill," he said. "The current policy is immoral, fiscally irresponsible and bad public policy."

"Employers have a responsibility to provide health care for their employees," New York City Central Labor Council Executive Director Ed Ott told *Clarion*. "If we're going to change that standard, we need to do it in a universal and organized way." Moreover, he pointed out, "it's actually to the benefit of the employers to have a healthy workforce."

DEDICATION

"CUNY part-time faculty are dedicated to our students," said Newfield. "They teach through chemotherapy and broken bones – and while they can, no one should have to do so." Most adjuncts don't share these hardships with students, Newfield said, but students know.

"What is the message that CUNY is presenting to our students?" she asked. "That hard work, degrees and dedication will earn you no consideration? What students deserve instead is a CUNY that provides all faculty and staff with decent health insurance, and allows them to take time off when they face a health catastrophe. *That's* the kind of university we want."

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Courtesy of Walter Dufresne

BE TO SCALE
APPROXIMATE

'Immoral, fiscally irresponsible, and bad public policy'

NEW LABOR LEADERS

CUNY's Union U.

By DANIA RAJENDRA

In 1997, Duke University sophomore Amanda Plumb spent the summer in New York interning with UNITE, the clothing and textile workers' union. She found the opportunity through Duke's internship program. Now, as a Higher Education Assistant at CUNY, she offers students interested in the labor movement an intensive program of internship and coursework called "Union Semester."

"Social justice roadmaps" are posted all over the walls of Plumb's office. The "roadmap" is an exercise Plumb assigns all her Union Semester students during orientation. Each plots the important points of their intellectual and emotional journey to the labor movement, and the students then discuss the maps as a way of introducing themselves to one another.

When asked about her background, Plumb plucked out her own map to show the winding journey to Union Semester, where she's been the coordinator for nearly two years. The first stop on her map was a blueberry bush. "In high school, I was into community service. I was picking blueberries for a soup kitchen," she said. "And I thought, there has got to be a better way to help people."

INTERNSHIP

A later stop was her internship at UNITE, where she and fellow interns helped research and design the organizing materials that launched what became United Students Against Sweatshops. She returned to Duke, where she and fellow students won a campaign to require college-licensed wear to be produced in "sweat-free" shops, where workers' rights are respected. After graduation, she worked at non-profit organizations and unions, including the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, Amnesty International and the United Auto Workers.

Closer to the present, the map showed GEO, the Graduate Employee Organization, at UMass-Amherst, the union that Plumb belonged to, and worked for, while earning her master's in labor studies.

Plumb's personal experience led her to value both practical experi-

ence and academic inquiry as preparation for an aspiring unionist. "The internship gives our students solid work experience and a real-life view of what unions are really like," she explained. "Union Semester is the only program in the country that couples an internship in labor with an academic component."

Like Plumb a few years ago, Kim Wong is a graduate student in labor studies. For her, "the hands-on experience was a big draw" in applying to Union Semester. As an intern at the PSC this semester, she said, "I've sat in on a Public Employment Relations Board hearing and a meeting between a grievance counselor and a grievant."

PICKET LINE

Amanda Partridge, a Hunter College alumna who returned to the city to participate in Union Semester, began her internship with the Writers Guild while the union was on strike. "I walked the picket line every day," she said, and learned about the combination of high-stakes pressure and boredom that comes with a sustained job action. Now that the strike is settled she may find herself in an office where Writers Guild members work, instead of out on the street – but there's still plenty to learn. "I shadow my mentor, and I see everything she does on a daily basis," Partridge said. "I see the way she talks with members, building relationships over time."

The coursework, Partridge told *Clarion*, "helps you understand the context in which you're placing your work." Other students agreed.

"I'm taking 'Labor and Globalization,'" said Wong. "We talk about how bigger, macro issues are shaping what's happening in our internships."

"The classes really help you prepare for what you're hearing in the meetings" on the job, said Mark Calderon, a Queens College student interning at Communications Workers of America Local 1180.

Faculty from across CUNY teach the courses from a mix of disciplines, on subjects such as US labor history or the sociology of work. Students attend classes on two



Higher Education Assistant Amanda Plumb runs CUNY's Union Semester program.

weeknights, after a full day at their internships.

Plumb brings the practical and the academic perspectives together in a weekly seminar in which "the internship is the main text." In one class, for example, students outlined the structure of their unions, which Plumb led "into a discussion of union democracy," she said.

Plumb uses the seminar to build community among the students, a big part of Union Semester's success. "Interning at a union often comes with a lot of surprises for young activists," she said. "There's a big difference between being a student activist and being a union staffer." Plumb's class addresses the concerns and conflicts that arise from that difference. For example, what does it mean to intern for a union that endorses a candidate for president you don't support?

As a HEO with a wide-ranging job description, Plumb builds the

Union Semester community in many other ways. She runs the orientation ("a crash course in the labor movement"); matches students to internships based on their interests; and assists students with problems on the job or in adjusting to life in New York City ("Sometimes I feel like a social worker.").

MUTUAL SUPPORT

Students say that Plumb's work pays off. "You really feel that people here care about you," Wong told *Clarion*. Graduates have written Plumb to say they miss the strong mutual support.

Like other HEOs, Plumb also does the less glamorous work that keeps the program running. The day *Clarion* visited her office, she was interrupted by phone calls about the production of the program's brochures. She also invoices unions, processes students' enrollment forms and troubleshoots problems with CUNY systems (such as when Black-

board's not working, or when a student doesn't get her financial aid).

Union Semester is based in CUNY's Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies. It attracts students from all over CUNY, the US and the world. The program is now accepting applications for the Fall 08 session, and CUNY students, if accepted, can take the program via the E-Permit system. Undergraduates earn 16 credits when they complete the program, while graduate students earn 12 and a Certificate in Labor Studies. The Murphy Institute offers a range of classes on the labor movement, Plumb noted, and CUNY students and PSC members can take them without being part of Union Semester.

NUTS AND BOLTS

About 30 unions and other labor organizations participate, usually about 15 to 20 in a given semester. Each hosts one or two students. "Our interns have a lot of responsibility," said Plumb. "At a couple of places, the department where they work consists of only one person. An intern placed there doubles that department." Union summer interns do a lot more than xeroxing. Some research organizing targets, others work on lobbying campaigns. "Recently, two unions – the taxi workers and the Writers Guild – have hosted interns while on strike," Plumb said.

For unions, the benefit extends beyond having an extra set of hands. "A lot of unions are very invested in the next generation," Plumb observed. "Mentors enjoy having people around who ask the bigger questions that we don't always think about day to day, and students are intensely curious about such questions as, 'What's the union's position on immigration reform?' Or, 'Can the labor movement fundamentally challenge capitalism?'"

Students, she said, "are coming in with a lot of energy and ideology." In turn, they learn the nuts and bolts of how the labor movement functions.

Many Union Semester alumni add further labor movement "stops" to their roadmaps, Plumb said, often in graduate school or in union staff jobs. One of those alumni is PSC organizer Albert Muñoz.

"Union Semester was a pure academic introduction that I had lacked as an undergraduate, because I majored in biology," he said. Muñoz's map led through an internship at 1199 to a job at the Hotel and Motel Trades Council, and from there to the PSC. The program changed the map of his life, in other ways, too. "I met my partner Paul in Union Semester."

That lends additional credence to Calderon's enthusiastic encouragement to fellow CUNY students: "Do it, because it's a great opportunity to meet cool people and see how things work."

More information about Union Semester is available at www.unionsemester.org.

Linking internships and academics

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GHI/HIP requests for-profit status

By PETER HOGNESS

GHI and HIP, which merged in November 2006 to become EmblemHealth, are now seeking conversion to for-profit status.

"The plan is good for our customers, good for the people of New York and good for HIP and GHI," declared EmblemHealth CEO Anthony Watson at a January 29 hearing in Manhattan. "Our future stability depends on our ability to compete... against the vast economic advantages of large, out-of-state, for-profit insurers," Watson said. "Converting to for-profit status will allow us to access capital far more efficiently and less expensively." This in turn, the company claims, will enable investment in new technology, improved customer service and a range of new "insurance products."

The hearing was held by New York State Insurance Department, which must give permission before the conversion can go ahead.

City, unions eye move

Testimony was heavily negative, and the City of New York was among those taking a strong stand against the change to for-profit status.

"If GHI and HIP are granted for-profit status, they will quickly and substantially raise the rates they charge, and the City will have no choice but to pay for it," declared Deputy Mayor Ed Skyler. Shareholders "would rightly expect the highest possible return on their investment" and would demand major rate increases. It would be easy to raise rates, the City contends, because GHI and HIP premiums today are much lower than those of their nearest competitor.

LAWSUIT

The City is suing to overturn the merger as anti-competitive. Skyler said that if the deal goes through, it is vital for the City to get a large

share of the cash from the conversion. The new company's initial stock offering would create a financial windfall of over a billion dollars, and New York City, State and union welfare funds all have their eyes on those funds.

City employees make up the largest block of GHI/HIP customers. "We want our members, the dedicated City workers who are the real stakeholders, who have contributed to the value of GHI/HIP for decades, to get a fair share of the proceeds," Municipal Labor Committee Chair Randi Weingarten, who is also president of the United Federation of Teachers, told the civil service weekly *The Chief*. On February 29, Weingarten wrote the State on behalf of the MLC to ask that GHI/HIP's request be denied, until those concerns are addressed.

Municipal unions focus on finances.

The PSC is "vigilantly protecting members' interests," President Barbara Bowen assured members at the PSC's February 28 Delegate Assembly. It's not just the PSC that is affected, noted Bowen. "There are unions representing

300,000 municipal employees monitoring this situation, and they have two main concerns: cost and service to members," she said. City unions have "taken a very strong position that it was mainly union workers who created the equity in HIP and GHI."

"I don't see any upside to this for the unions and their welfare funds. I think it's a bad idea for GHI and HIP to go for-profit," said Welfare Fund Executive Director Larry Morgan. "But if they do, it's essential that the money from the conversion be used to stabilize health care costs for union members."

Public-interest groups have staked out a stance of strong oppo-

sition to a for-profit conversion. "As a for-profit company, GHI/HIP will be permitted to spend less of each premium dollar on health expenses and more on marketing, administration, and executive salaries and benefits," warned Consumers Union.

NO NEED TO RUSH

Len Rodberg, chair of urban studies at Queens College, spoke at the January 29 hearing on behalf of the NY Metro Chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program, where he is research director. For-profit conversion of GHI and HIP, he said, "moves us farther from, not closer to, the goal of universal health care....It would add still another entity that will stand in the way of achieving equitable access for all."

"There is no need to rush forward," said Mark Hannay of Metro New York Health Care for All, "other than perhaps the State getting its hands on 80% of [the proceeds] in a tight budget year."

Welfare Fund's new long-term care program

By PATRICK SMITH
PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund

Opening to those in old plan

The Welfare Fund is now offering its new John Hancock long-term care insurance plan to PSC members who already have long-term care coverage under the company's previous plan. As a plus, many current policyholders will be able to purchase the new program without providing any medical information if they apply during the upcoming enrollment window. This offer follows the initial offer of a new policy last fall to members without Welfare Fund long-term care insurance.

ENROLLEES IN THE ORIGINAL PROGRAM

The 1,900 people enrolled in the old plan will soon be notified by mail that they can choose to transfer to the new program. They will receive a rate quote in accordance with the level of care they select. However, anyone in the original program – which still provides excellent coverage – may simply stay with it if they wish.

Members who elect to join the new program at their current benefit level or at an increased level will have the option to sign up during the upcoming special enrollment period, from mid-April to mid-May. (Exact dates will be provided in the mailing and posted on the Welfare Fund website, www.pscunywelfare.org.)

A significant special feature of the new program is a one-time opportunity for "guaranteed acceptance" – the ability to join without the need for medical evidence of insurability. During this special enrollment period, John Hancock has agreed to waive the normal requirement of proof of insurability



for current enrollees who are under age 70 as of May 1, 2008, and who are full-time active employees. Those members will qualify for guaranteed acceptance. Those enrolled in the old long-term care insurance plan who do not meet these age and employment criteria will still qualify if they enroll in the new program during the limited enrollment period at their current lev-

el of coverage. To enroll at a higher benefit level, however, those enrollees may be required to produce proof of insurability.

WHY OFFER A NEW PLAN?

This new insurance program builds on the Welfare Fund's pioneering long-term care plan of the 1980s and adds more choices due to the many changes in the arena of

long-term care. As people live longer, their chances of needing some form of assisted living increase. Many prefer to be insured for alternatives to nursing home care, e.g., assisted living, adult day care, home attendant services and more. The new offering will provide current enrollees with these options.

As part of a year-long development and negotiation process, Welfare Fund trustees appointed a committee (composed of Fund staff and trustees, long-term care experts from our consulting firm, and retirees and former board members who participate in our current plan) to negotiate which plan benefits would be offered through the John Hancock Life Insurance Company. We chose Hancock based on their performance with the current long-term care plan and the company's excellent reputation in the long-term care insurance field.

PAY TO PARTICIPATE

The new program is completely voluntary, funded by the premiums paid by those who choose to enroll. It is intended to address the needs of our membership by meeting the objectives of affordable cost, comprehensive benefits, greater flexibility and broader eligibility for coverage, including adjunct and hourly personnel. Current Hancock policyholders who have questions about the new plan can call the John Hancock Customer Service Center at (617) 572-0048, Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm Eastern Time. They can also submit questions to our Service Center by visiting the PSC Welfare Fund Long-Term Care Website. (The web address and a special username and password are available on the Wel-

fare Fund website at www.pscunywelfare.org.)

THE FIRST PHASE

Last fall's enrollment program, when the new plan was first made available to those not already covered under the Welfare Fund's previous long-term care plan, was quite successful. Of the 400 people who signed up, over 95% were able to take advantage of "guaranteed acceptance." Many entering the new program selected higher levels of coverage, but some, particularly older enrollees facing higher premiums, chose lower levels. Access to the medical/nursing team of the John Hancock program, if and when care is required, was important to many who chose to sign up.

Not surprisingly, over half of the application forms last fall were received during the final week. Enrollment sometimes involves unhurried contemplation and then a rush to get in during the window of opportunity. The surge of late enrollment caused the initial eligibility date for some to be pushed back to February.

A third of the new enrollees did not elect payroll deduction as a payment method. Since experience indicates that direct billing leads to higher rates of cancellation for premium non-payment, the Fund office provided those members with a second chance to elect payroll deduction.

SECOND PHASE: THE TIME IS NOW

The Welfare Fund encourages members enrolled under the old plan to take the time to learn more about this new long-term care coverage. Decisions such as this are easy to put off, but there is a very good incentive to actively consider it now.

MEMBERS' STORIES

Struggling on CUNY salaries

When the PSC bargaining team invited you to tell us about the effects of CUNY's failure to provide competitive salaries, we were flooded with messages. This is a small sample. Salary increases are at the top of the PSC's negotiating agenda, and no one explains why more eloquently than our members. There is still time to add your voice: click on the PSC website www.psc-cuny.org or e-mail stonge@pscmail.org to send us your story. (And let us know if you would prefer to remain anonymous.)

The testimony of colleagues shows that struggles with salary are not individual or departmental – they are collective. Don't read these stories and weep; read them and organize!

Mario DiGangi
Associate professor, English
Lehman College

This morning I received a phone call from an outstanding candidate we were considering for an open position. This dynamic young scholar was from New York and received his PhD from an Ivy League institution; he indicated he felt good about his interview and the prospect of working at CUNY. However, he received an offer from a research university in the South with a two-two courseload and a salary more commensurate with the cost of living. With our low salaries and three-four senior college courseload, CUNY cannot compete for the best candidates.

Eric Balzer
Adjunct lecturer, paralegal studies
City Tech

I have a law degree, 25 years of legal experience and three years as a secondary school teacher with the NYC Department of Education. Last year I interviewed for a full-time position at CUNY, and I liked the staff and the program. However when I heard about the salary – almost 40% less than what I made as a high school teacher – I asked to be removed from consideration for the position.

We are training students for real jobs that will add to the quality of life for our entire city. CUNY's salary structure should recognize the critical contribution of the instructional faculty to our urban economic lifeblood.



Dave Sanders

'What will it take for me to leave?'



Peter Hogness

Robin Isserles
Assistant professor, sociology
BMCC

I am a third generation CUNYite – in the 1950s, my widowed grandmother attended City College “downtown” (later, Baruch) to become a teacher so she could support my mother and uncle. Both of my parents attended Queens College in the mid 1960s. I re-

ceived my PhD at the Graduate Center. This family history is quite important to me. In many ways I feel I belong here at CUNY. But it is so difficult to rationalize how little I make with how hard I work to meet the demands of this job.

When I am in the classroom I have no desire to teach anywhere else. The students in my classrooms are passionate, thirsty – and when they feel respected and challenged, they thrive. This is where I feel I belong, certainly as a teacher. But when I come back to my rodent-infested office where it is too hot in the winter and too cold in the summer, when I struggle to keep up with teaching my classes well and making sure I don't miss deadlines for paper calls, conferences and grants, I do get inspired to dust off my CV and apply elsewhere.

When a job that I love is compounded by so many things that make me anxious and discouraged, I often ask myself – what will it take for me to leave? How much will my love of the students here sustain me? How far will the belief in what I do in the classroom take me? I don't yet know the answer. I do know that right now I am committed to CUNY – its history is very dear to me. I don't want to teach anywhere else, and I hope I am able to afford to stay.

Joel Berger
Professor emeritus, education
College of Staten Island

I began my career in CUNY in 1968; my colleague Harris Goldberg and I established a well-regarded program in science education. With grants from the National Science Foundation, we developed curricula and promoted science education enrichment programs within the public schools.

When we retired, the departmental searches for our replacements always came up short, due to the lack of competitive salaries. Substitutes and adjuncts were the

norm. When a search finally produced a viable candidate, Robert Tai, he remained at the college for only two years before accepting a position at the University of Maryland. After another two years of substitutes and adjuncts, Peter Morgan was hired. He also left the college to teach elsewhere.

It is disturbing, after building up an exemplary program, that the torch which we wished to pass to new faculty has been extinguished, as the newly hired leave CUNY for other universities.

Attention must be paid to faculty salaries and working conditions if CUNY wishes to be considered a first-rate institution.

John Harbeson
Professor, political science
City College & the Graduate Center

Whether CUNY would consider its true peers to be good liberal arts colleges because we are a system of liberal arts colleges, or a doctoral university because of the Graduate Center, CUNY is out of line on teaching loads, salaries, research support and relative technology. My colleagues at other institutions look at me in disbelief when I tell them about conditions here.

At the full professor level, CUNY's salaries are about 75% of where they should be, and in one of the more expensive regions of the country. Most of us stay here because we love the diversity of the student body and the city, but very frankly CUNY takes advantage of us in that respect. I've seen no indication that anyone in the upper reaches of the CUNY administration knows or cares that we are so out of line. I do give PSC credit for doing what it can to rectify all this, like the increased support for sabbaticals which is very welcome, but there is so very much more to do.

'If you want to keep CUNY students, keep CUNY faculty.'

Paula Gannon
Adjunct lecturer, social work
Hostos Community College

From 50 to 60% of CUNY's faculty are part-timers, many with advanced degrees, and there's business rationale aplenty for CUNY to retain more of this deeply committed, talented labor pool. The University must build in more job security for part-time faculty, including more part-time to full-time conversion lines, and provide wages that reflect the real amount of time required for better student outcomes and graduation rates.

Of the 277 students I've taught in the last four semesters at Hostos, 45% spoke a language other than English at home. These adult students are a worthy investment, so hardworking – 58% of my students work full-time, with more than 30% juggling three or more adult roles (full-time student, parent, wage-earner or caring for infirm parents). So community college students are understandably overburdened, and terribly stressed, thus requiring more faculty time and attention – for assessment, for support services, for weekly written homework, for more after-class consultations and for more referrals to CUNY's tutoring and counseling services.

For a conscientious pedagogue, full-time or part-time, these student realities mean additional hours worked outside of the classroom to ensure good learning outcomes. For part-time faculty, it means a vow of poverty. My adjunct colleagues calculate a 1:3 hour ratio (in-class: out-of-class student support hours) to ensure each of the 30+ students per class gets the individual attention and direction they want and deserve.

Can we expect to retain talented, valuable part-time faculty when they are so underpaid? The faculty turnover that results has its inevitable cost.

The October 2007 “Harper's Index” listed a series of statistics that caught my eye: “Estimated amount that teacher turnover costs US school districts each year in recruiting and training: \$7,000,000,000. Chances that a new public-school teacher in Philadelphia will leave within six years: seven in 10. Chances that an entering high school student will not graduate within the same span: four in 10.”

Adjunct turnover at CUNY also has a high cost, and our students pay the price in needlessly low retention and graduation rates.

If you want to keep CUNY students, keep CUNY faculty.

Victoria Wallace**Higher Education Assistant, office of testing
Queensborough Community College**

I am not only a CUNY employee, but an alumna as well. I have now worked in three CUNY institutions and attended one (BA and MS). I have enjoyed my time at CUNY, but it is becoming more evident that I may need to look elsewhere.

Like many other CUNY faculty and staff, I'm a single mom, not receiving child support. You would think that the fact that I hold a master's degree, and am an HEO that I would be able to support my child and myself, but I'm not. My father always told me that you should never spend more than one-fourth of your monthly salary on your rent or mortgage. Well, one-fourth of my take-home salary is \$650 (not even enough to rent a small room in a bad neighborhood!). Half of my monthly salary could afford us a decent two bedroom apartment, but then I'd have to cut out food and clothes. So what do I do? Right now, we've been lucky enough to have friends rent us a room in their house.

Up until May of last year, I had two jobs and worked an average of 60 hours per week. The business I worked for closed suddenly, and I decided to take some time to spend with my child. I'm now looking for another part-time job. I'm also looking at other colleges and universities that pay more. I actually may take the offer to work as a high school guidance counselor, as my pay would increase by at least \$5,000 per year, thus making it possible to work only one job.

How does this affect students? Well, more and more you have excellent professors and excellent staff leave, because they can no



Dave Sanders

longer afford to stay. "You get what you pay for" is too often true!

It saddens me that our city/state and chancellor do not feel as if we are worth a competitive salary. Our master's and doctoral degrees are not worth as much as the bachelor's and master's degrees of kindergarten teachers. I would hate to leave CUNY, as it is dear to my heart, but my time is drawing to an end. My child means more to me than CUNY (or anything else), and I no longer want to be an absent mom.

'The gap between low salaries and high housing costs has a severe negative impact.'

Barbara Simerka**Associate professor, Spanish
Queens College**

In many ways I am very happy to be at CUNY; teaching first-generation college students like myself had always been my goal. I know that my life story has helped to inspire discouraged and overworked students to hang in there for another semester or to pursue graduate study.

But the gap between low CUNY salaries and high housing costs has a severe negative impact: I cannot afford to rent or purchase even modest housing in areas in NYC that offer good schools for my child and safe streets. Like most faculty hired over the past decade, I have been forced to live in a remote area and commute for an hour or more.

Amy Herzog**Assistant professor, media studies
Queens College**

In 2004 I was hired as an assistant professor at Queens. I soon found that my income was barely enough to cover living expenses, given the sizable amount of debt I had built up while completing my PhD.

I was hardly alone. During the past three years, three young assistant professors have left my department to take jobs elsewhere. Many faculty in my department, junior and senior, are actively seeking higher-paying positions. I find this incredibly disheartening.

Over the past three and a half years, I have worked tirelessly. I typically teach over 100 students per semester, many in writing-intensive courses, with no teaching assistants. I've been an active member of the

community, advising the student radio station, mentoring honors students, and I have acted as chair of our department's undergraduate curriculum committee. I have spent every spare hour writing and researching, presenting lectures and conference papers, publishing articles and chapters, and I am in the process of securing a book contract at a major university press. Yet a promotion, if granted, will offer only a minimal change in salary.

If CUNY is to sustain itself as a quality institution of higher education, it must commit itself to paying faculty a competitive salary. We are losing our best resources and eroding the foundation of the institution in the process. Our students are the real victims here, denied the support, stability and excellence that they deserve.

Trying to 'run a first-rate academic operation at bargain-basement prices.'

Mitchell Kellman**Professor, political science
City College & the Graduate Center**

Two of our full-time faculty in the economics department up and quit just recently. One, an assistant professor, complained for several years that he and his young family cannot afford to live at his salary and would never be able to purchase a house. The other, a full professor, went and got a job with close to

twice the salary, and half the teaching load, in Arizona.

Right now, as a member of a departmental search committee, I am experiencing "real-time" effects of this ridiculous effort to run a first-rate academic operation at bargain-basement prices. We have interviewed many candidates and have made several informal offers. Not one of these offers has been accepted. The response is the same – too much work for too little money.

Marion D.S. Dreyfus**Adjunct lecturer, continuing & professional studies
Baruch**

In September of 2005, I began teaching at Baruch. I got \$50 an hour, which I thought low at the time. I have experience and had just come from several years of teaching at the college level.

I get paid very, very slowly – sometimes not for six months after I have taught the classes. This past paycheck, I noticed I had been given a raise. It was 50 cents per hour. So for a month of hard work, with endless hours of prep and grading and homework as-

signments and a huge amount of research to do, the best I can possibly receive is \$8 a month more.

At the same time, my rent went up \$130 a month. My food bills are 30% higher. My phone, electricity and computer bills are 25 to 30% higher. But my paycheck reflects an increase of 1% in more than two years' work.

I am desolate. I know I do a good job. I attend all practicums, all seminars and enrichment courses. I do norming on the side, where we are paid even less per hour. There is no way a person can live on this kind of income. It is undignified.

William Muraskin**Professor, urban studies
Queens College**

Today, after 37 years as a professor, I make approximately 25% less in real dollars than a full professor made when I was hired in 1971. The professorial ladder has for years sunk deeper and deeper into the ground until it

barely exists. Today, a high school teacher who has worked 20 years is entitled to \$99,000 which is only \$2,000 less than I receive after 37 years of college service. There is something out of kilter here. The State of New York seems to think that its experienced professors deserve less than its high school teachers – a strange way of looking at things.

'Students are denied the support, stability and excellence they deserve.'



Dave Sanders

Rafael Rosado**Higher Education Assistant, academic counseling
Lehman College**

Within the past three-and-a-half years, three academic counselors within my department have left for more rewarding opportunities. Since our office is relatively small, losing an academic advisor affects both the quality and quantity of service provided to our students. As you may know, when an academic counselor departs, he/she takes with him/

herself a wealth of academic policy and curriculum knowledge which may take months to acquire. As a result, students are advised, at times, by novice academic counselors who are less prepared to give them the best possible advice and information. Therefore, I would like to recommend that CUNY seriously consider raising salaries not only for faculty, but also for members of the non-teaching instructional staff. Raising salaries benefits not only the professional staff – it also assists the students.

New bill would limit air testing

By CLARION STAFF

A bill now before the New York City Council would require a police permit for possession of all "atmospheric biological, chemical and radiological detectors" outside of the City's health and fire departments. The stated purpose of the bill is to avoid "excessive false alarms and unwarranted anxiety." But a broad array of unions, academics, environmental groups and others strongly opposed the bill at its first City Council hearing January 8.

If Intro 650 is adopted, possession of such a detector without a valid permit would incur fines of up to \$2,000, imprisonment of up to 20 days, or both. The bill is written so broadly that ordinary environmental sensors, school laboratory equipment and even smoke detectors would come under police department administrative control.

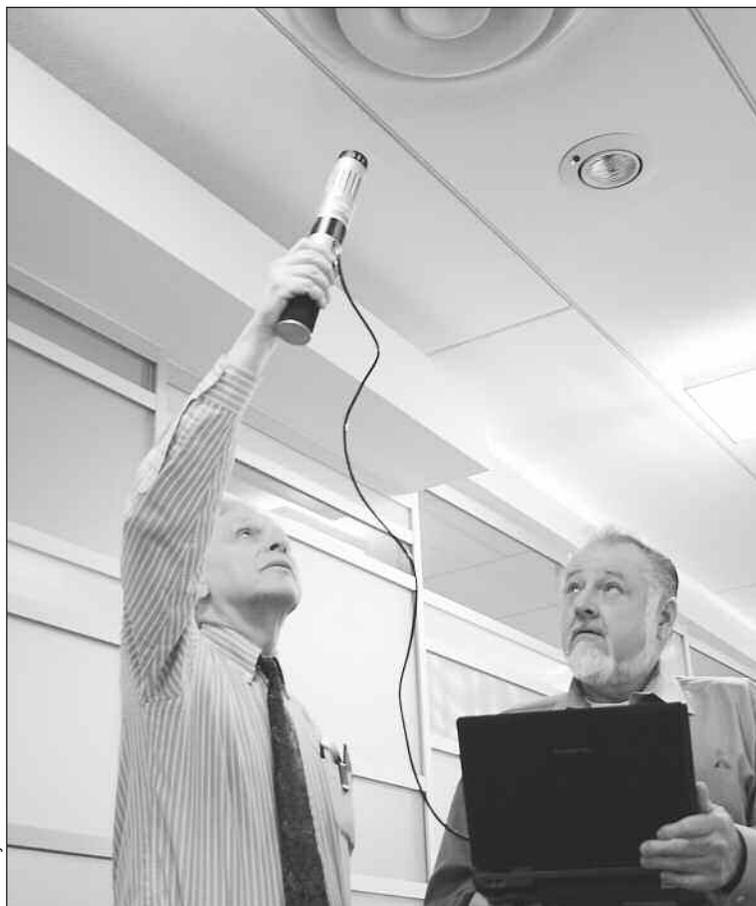
"Will transferring power and control over ordinary testing equipment to government agencies help us fight terrorism or prevent false alarms that we have yet to experience?" asked David Kotelchuck, co-chair of the PSC's health and safety committee. "Or is this a surrender of free speech and academic rights to measure and communicate environmental data among members of the public?"

Sponsored by Councilmember Peter Vallone, the bill was introduced at the request of Mayor Bloomberg and the NYPD. Richard Falkenrath, the NYPD's deputy commissioner for counter-terrorism, told the Council that the bill had originally been suggested by the federal Department of Homeland Security.

A STEP BACK

At the hearing New York City Central Labor Council and the NY Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) charged that the bill "would make it more difficult for the public and governmental agencies to obtain environmental sampling data in a timely manner." Kotelchuck testified that Intro 650 "would criminalize many activities

Independent monitoring at risk



PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs Dave Kotelchuck (left) and Bob Wurman.

conducted by industry, workers, academics and students."

City Councilmember John Liu observed that if this law had been in effect on 9/11, the independent testing done by unions and community-based organizations could not legally have been conducted. "The release of this independent data arguably did incite public alarm and embarrass government officials – to the benefit of the general public," argued a critique by a group of lawyers opposed to the bill.

"We feel this legislation creates more concerns than the problem it addresses," wrote Donald Hart, president of the American Industrial Hygiene Association, in a letter to Mayor Bloomberg. "Frankly, we are not convinced there is a problem."

Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer underscored that point at the January hearing. "I cannot think of any evidence or events from our recent past involving 'false alarms' that would create any urgency for such sweeping legislation," Stringer said.

Overall, testified Jack Caravanos, director of environmental and occupational health sciences at Hunter College, Intro 650 would represent "a step back" from the "community right-to-know" regulations that the environmental movement has fought hard to achieve.

In response to this opposition, sponsors of the bill have revised it – but critics are still not satisfied. The current version, Intro 650B excludes

from regulation smoke alarms and radon detectors, as well as detectors used by "accredited academic institutions...for the purpose of academic instruction."

However, the exemptions would not specifically cover environmental or community groups, or academics working with such organizations. These groups and private consultants would have to register equipment, detail anticipated activities and demonstrate their "good character and fitness" to the NYPD. The proposed rules also state that the police commissioner may, at his or her discretion, order "surrender of possession and/or the discontinuance of deployment" of any detector, if its use would "exacerbate a condition of public alarm" during an emergency.

SUBJECTIVE

More broadly, the new draft 650B would exclude from regulation those detectors which do not have "as a purpose the detection of a possible biological, chemical or radiological weapons attack." But making this distinction would not be easy, as instruments capable of detecting terrorist attacks are also used for ordinary detection of environmental contamination and occupational exposures.

"The new language requires a subjective evaluation of an individual's motives," warns the lawyers' critique. "Police officers will be put in an impossible situation. Unable to interrogate every person possessing or using a detector...they will be left to pick and choose among the public, which opens the door to arbitrary or discriminatory police action." Even with the best intentions, it adds, this is "likely to result in numerous confrontations" that would "create significant tension between the police and the public."

The bill is still before the Council, and opponents are asking New Yorkers to contact their councilmembers to register their concerns. (Full text of the bill and further information are at www.nycosh.org.)

Unions oppose requiring permits for detectors.

CUNY IN BRIEF

\$1 mil for John Jay

Best-selling crime novelist Patricia Cornwell donated one million dollars to the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to start a school for crime scene investigation, the Associated Press reported. Her gift will go to John Jay's new Crime Scene Academy, which is slated to open in the Fall.

Cornwell has complained about misleading fictional depictions of crime scene investigations in film and television. "It's like 'Star Trek' compared to the real Air Force," she said.

GC starts bio center

Last month, the Graduate Center announced a new center for the study of biography, to be headed by Hunter Distinguished Lecturer Nancy Milford, who has written books about Zelda Fitzgerald and Edna St. Vincent Millay.

GC history Professor David Nasaw, who will serve as the faculty director, called biography "the stepchild of the academy" in *The New York Times*. The new center aims to change that status, he said.

The center will offer fellowships for academics and non-academics working in the multimedia field of biography and host an annual international conference and lectures, the *Times* reported.

Botman departs for USM

Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and University Provost Selma Botman's last day at CUNY will be in July, CUNY announced on March 5. She has been selected as the new president of the University of Southern Maine, one of the seven schools that make up the University of Maine. She has held her CUNY position for four years.

Chancellor Matthew Goldstein announced that he will appoint Alexandra Logue as Botman's interim replacement. Logue is currently serving as special advisor to the chancellor and associate provost.

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15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Tell Albany: boost CUNY funding

Tell your New York State elected officials that this is the year to fund public higher ed fairly – with a big investment to build the 21st Century CUNY. Our underfunded University needs a real down payment on its future, which is really a down payment on New York's future. The State Commission on Higher Education stated what

CUNY faculty and staff know all too well: NY public higher education is no longer competitive with its peers, even as New Yorkers need public higher education to succeed and prosper. Send your state lawmakers letters by clicking on the "Act Now" part of the union's website, www.psc-cuny.org.