

Clarion

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



APRIL 2005



PSC DEFENSE FUND

MEMBERS SIGN UP

CUNY management still refuses to make a contract offer that preserves Welfare Fund benefits, gives real raises, and makes CUNY a better place to work. In response, PSC members are signing up to contribute to a Union Defense Fund, to cover special expenses of a militant contract campaign. Not since the 1970s, when the PSC first established a Defense Fund, has the need for such a campaign been so urgent. **PAGES 6-7, 10-12**



POLITICS

Members grill mayoral hopefuls

PSC forum draws all challengers.

PAGE 5

RESEARCH FOUNDATION

RF union election at Grad Center in May

Close to 200 employees of the CUNY Research Foundation who work at the Graduate Center will have the chance to vote for union representation in early May. **PAGE 5**



PROTEST

CCNY administration draws fire for arrests

The response to a demonstration about on-campus military recruitment is part of a wider hostility to dissent at City College, say students, faculty and staff. The arrest and suspension of four protesters drew sharp criticism. **PAGE 4**



HEALTH

Drug ads: are they good for your health?

Did you know that the United States will soon be the only country that allows direct-to-consumer advertising for prescription drugs? Find out why. **PAGE 9**



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 25 W. 43RD STREET, FIFTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10036. E-MAIL: PHOGNESS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: 212-302-7815.

Management responds to Clarion

1 – Comment from CSI

● I wish to comment regarding the story entitled “CSI chapter presses health & safety,” which appeared in a recent issue of *Clarion*.

Since the CSI Willowbrook campus was opened ten years ago, the College has consistently dealt with the issue of mold. Every building on campus was inspected for mold and reports detailing corrective measures are on file with CUNY’s Office of Design, Construction and Management, who are handling the remediation project through the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York. In the meantime, the College handles day-to-day mold issues with our own mold abatement team of College personnel under the direction of our Environmental Health and Safety Officer. Members of the

team have been trained specifically to handle the safe removal of mold. If a project is too big to be handled by the in-house team, outside vendors who hold licenses to remove mold are called in.

Please note that the College welcomes any and all inquiries regarding issues that affect the health and safety of everyone at CSI. We respond to every inquiry with seriousness and attention to detail.

Angelo J. Aponte
VP for Finance & Administration
College of Staten Island

Clarion editor Peter Hogness responds: CSI administration has indeed worked to remove mold in campus buildings. The article in our February issue described how the PSC chapter at CSI has pressed for action, and noted that “there has

been some progress on this persistent problem.” The article quoted Shah Jayman, of the CSI PSC chapter’s executive committee, on the fact that in some areas “the mold is beginning to disappear...The administration is responding.” Jayman commended VP Aponte’s decision to put gutters on one building as an experiment.

“The key problem is that as long as water leaks are prevalent on the CSI campus, there will be a problem with mold,” comments David Kotelchuck, co-chair of the PSC Health and Safety Committee. “While it is essential ‘to remove any contaminated material,’ this is insufficient. Until the leaks are fixed, the mold problem will constantly recur.”

As VP Aponte notes, mold has been a problem at CSI since its current campus opened 12 years ago.

“To realize the college’s mission and educational objectives in a safe and healthy environment requires that this problem be fixed now, not allowed to drag on,” says Vasilios Petratos, PSC chapter chair at CSI. “It is urgent that DASNY carry out the necessary repairs, and it is the joint responsibility of the CSI and CUNY administrations to make sure that this happens.”

2 – 80th Street objection

● It is understandable that the PSC would wish to spin its story on the LaGuardia case (*Clarion*, March 2005) to make it seem like a victory. The truth, however, is that the PSC lost its grievance and could have achieved far more if it had settled the case more than three years ago.

In the 1998 summer session, LaGuardia Community College ended its practice of paying instructional staff in Cooperative Education at the teaching hourly rate even though only a minimal amount of their work involved classroom teaching. The arbitrator denied the PSC’s grievance, finding that the College properly paid the non-teaching rate for work other than classroom teaching. The court upheld that decision but reversed the arbitrator’s denial of back pay for those paid the non-teaching rate for classroom teaching since the summer of 1998.

In September 2001 the PSC and the College tentatively agreed that the PSC would withdraw the grievance and the College would guarantee existing full-time instructional staff at least 150 hours at the teaching rate for work in future summer sessions. The PSC later wanted adjuncts and substitutes included, a demand the College rejected. After more than two years of inaction, the PSC walked away from this tentative settlement and lost the arbitration. The result? During summer sessions, full-time Cooperative Education faculty will be paid at the teaching rate only for actual classroom teaching.

Frederick P. Schaffer
CUNY General Counsel and
Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs

PSC First Vice President Steve London responds: It is premature for Vice Chancellor Schaffer to wag his finger at LaGuardia Coop Education faculty and tell them they should have settled. Judge Friedman affirmed that they should be paid at the teaching rate when teaching and vacated the arbitrator’s award. The judge also remanded the matter back to arbitration “...on the amount of unpaid compensation to which grievants are entitled for the teaching of courses at the teaching rate...” What activities constitute

“teaching of courses” and the amount of back pay owed are the issues that will be decided by a new arbitrator.

The vice chancellor also has his facts wrong on the history of settlement discussions. There was no “tentative agreement” in 2001. At that time, the full-time faculty fought to add 12 adjuncts to a list of 25 full-time faculty who would benefit from the 150-hour prospective settlement offered by management. In spring 2003, the grievants and LaGuardia agreed on 21 full-timers as the list of grievants in settlement discussions. When the grievants sought to add two substitutes to the list of 21, LaGuardia refused and then took two full-time substitutes, previously agreed upon, off the list.

While it is true that the faculty have thus far made an economic sacrifice in not taking the original settlement offer, the value of the principle of solidarity and of not throwing the weak overboard seems to escape Vice Chancellor Schaffer.

Don’t ‘let market decide’

● As a longtime public school teacher I worry a lot about the corporate domination of public schools, but reading in *The New York Times* that IBM’s Lou Gerstner, former governors, and other Standardists are inspiring changes in the CUNY teacher education program sure grabbed my attention. I hope the CUNY faculty is more than “surprised” by the new academy (March 2005 *Clarion*, “Education faculty surprised by new academy”). Outrage and resistance seem more appropriate reactions.

When a university chancellor declares that he wants a “competitive environment for teacher education” and “let the market decide,” one has to wonder about where his priorities are. *Letting the market decide* should be an anathema in a place concerned with fostering learning, a place established to educate teachers capable of nurturing students. *Letting the market decide* sounds more like selling your baby to the highest bidder than nurturing it.

In *Why Is Corporate America Bashing Our Public Schools?* my co-author and I document the corporate agenda for public schools. Instead of scrambling for places in the new hierarchy, it would be refreshing to see professors offering resistance. Future public school teachers badly need this model of resistance, not more marketplace compliance.

Susan Ohanian
Charlotte, Vermont

Editor’s note: Ohanian was given the 2003 George Orwell Award from the National Council of Teachers of English, for distinguished contribution to honesty and clarity in public language. Her website, www.susanohanian.org, features news and comment about trends in education.

Anti-war educators draw big crowd



Lisa Quiñones

More than 500 educators and 250 students attended the Educators to Stop the War conference on March 5. The PSC was a co-sponsor of the conference, a project of US Labor Against the War.

The turnout far exceeded organizers’ expectations. “The numbers, diversity, energy, and focus of the people who came convince us that we have struck a chord that will resonate widely in the months to come,” said co-conveners Nancy Romer of the PSC and Michael Zweig of the UUP chapter at SUNY-Stony Brook.

Most participants were from the NYC metro area, but others came from Massachusetts, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and as far away as Iowa. They included members of the AFT, NEA and AAUP, as well as both high school and college students.

The conference focused on teaching about the war in Iraq, organizing against the war in local and national education unions, and the effects of the war on social spending and contract negotiations.

New York is paying a high cost for the Iraq war. According to the

National Priorities Project, the state’s proportional share of the war’s total cost so far is \$17.7 billion; NYC’s share is \$6.6 billion. In the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, court-appointed experts called for an additional \$14.8 billion in K-12 education spending – but the State Legislature says it does not know where to find the money.

Pedagogical resources for talking about and teaching about the war are available at www.educatorstostopthewar.org/resources.htm. The website also provides information on future plans. **DR/PH**

Panel falls from Marshak building

By DANIA RAJENDRA

The night of Thursday, March 17, a large concrete slab fell from the 11th floor of the Marshak building, which houses science research at City College. No one was injured, but faculty, students and staff were locked out for much of the day on Friday and classes did not resume for nearly a week. At press time, some labs and the outdoor plaza around the building's tower remained closed.

Science faculty expressed frustration at the CCNY administration's lack of communication, both during this crisis and in past discussions of the building's many health and safety hazards. But after a flurry of meetings with top administrators in late March and April, several expressed cautious optimism.

BRIEF VIEW

When the panel fell, it left only a very thin inner wall between the lab space of Michael Green, professor of chemistry, and the whistling wind. When construction workers ripped out this inner wall to replace it with more secure plywood, "I had this beautiful view of the Bronx," said Green. "Fortunately, then it was gone immediately...Except for the electricity along that wall, we are back in business." The area is used for computers, not chemical experiments.

Green said that workers used steel cables to shore up the remaining panels in his lab and elsewhere, to ensure

CCNY, 80th St. promise information and action

that the incident would not be repeated. Bob Wurman of the PSC's Health and Safety Committee said that the panel's weight was variously estimated at between 1000 and 3000 pounds. The morning after it fell, union officers repeatedly spoke with administrators at 80th Street to ensure that immediate safety measures were taken and that no employees lost pay while their workplace was closed.

Problems with Marshak were legion even before the panel fell. Water leaks have damaged the building's steel reinforcing rods, which weaken and expand as they rust and force the concrete off in flakes, a process known as "spalling." Large steel brackets have had to be installed on the building's exterior to maintain its structural integrity, said Wurman.

"We are now seeing the results of City College's inadequate maintenance and its long history of neglect of health and safety issues in the Marshak building," said PSC Executive Director Deborah Bell. "This latest incident is an accident that did not have to happen."

"We've been trying for a year and a half to get the administration to work with us to address the problems in the Marshak building," said the chair of CCNY's PSC chapter, Steve Leberstein. The chapter filed



At right, rusting reinforcing rods force concrete to flake off. The braces, seen across the window, help hold the building up.

a grievance in February of 2004, and though some progress was made, Leberstein said, "up to now we were unable to achieve that constructive relationship."

WORRIES REMAIN

"The administration now appears more willing to include faculty and staff in communication and decision making," Leberstein said, "though the reality of the promise is still to be tested." He added that the union is working closely with a committee of science division faculty to hold the administration accountable.

plans call for simultaneous construction of a new CUNY-wide science research facility, located at CCNY, and a new science building for City College, she said.

At that meeting, Biology Department Chair Jane Gallagher challenged Small and Maria Tamargo, CCNY's acting dean of science, to work on limiting damage to experiments while Marshak undergoes stopgap repairs. The noise, jarring and debris of construction can disrupt months or years of work, scientists pointed out. During the meeting, loud noise from a project nearby sometimes drowned out the conversation.

STOP GAP MEASURES

To extend the building's life, CUNY plans to encase Marshak in a glass curtain wall to protect it from the elements and limit further water damage, while at the same time overhauling the ventilation systems.

Based on reports from engineering and environmental consultants hired by the union, the PSC has questioned whether the glass wall would worsen already severe air quality problems from soot, mold and broken fume hoods, among other concerns. The PSC intends to press administrators to address these issues at an upcoming grievance hearing.

Many who work in Marshak said that the fall of the concrete panel has meant more administrative attention, which they welcome. The series of meetings that followed left faculty hoping for new progress.

CUNY's budget battles

By CINDRA FEUER

At the end of March, New York lawmakers rejected Governor Pataki's proposal for tuition hikes and cuts to student aid programs. The March agreement was hailed by the media as the first on-time budget in more than two decades.

But the Legislature's budget fails to meet CUNY's mandatory cost increases, leaving the college system in the red while its student body expands. At *Clarion* press time, Pataki agreed to the Legislature's budget for CUNY, including no tuition increases.

NO HIKE

The budget approved by the Senate and Assembly struck down Pataki's proposed \$500 tuition hike at public universities, restoring \$37.3 million to CUNY's budget to make up the difference.

The Legislature's budget also did not include Pataki's scheme to restructure the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). He wanted to withhold half the amount of TAP grants

Still more state support needed

until students received their degrees, compelling students to take out more loans. Though Pataki dubbed this a "graduation incentive," the PSC, NYPIRG and student groups argued that it would be an obstacle to finishing.

Also restored was \$7.2 million to the SEEK program, \$363,000 to College Discovery and funding for other opportunity programs. State base aid for community colleges was boosted by \$115 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, or about \$7.5 million.

But \$22 million in operating aid "temporarily" frozen by Pataki last year was not restored, in either Pataki's FY2006 budget proposal or the budget just passed by the Senate and Assembly. It becomes a cut to CUNY's baseline budget. Overall, the Legislature's budget leaves CUNY \$26.3 million short of its costs for FY2006.

"We're glad that restorations to CUNY's budget avoided a tuition increase," said PSC Secretary Cecelia

McCall, coordinator of the union's Legislative Committee. "But the budget didn't restore enough to make up for reductions last year."

Legislators in Albany authorized \$663 million for CUNY and SUNY's capital spending plans.

CITY BUDGET

Mayor Bloomberg's budget proposal for FY 2006 would provide \$151 million for CUNY, a decrease in City support of over \$30 million.

Bloomberg wants to eliminate two key student aid programs, the Peter Vallone Scholarships (\$7.0 million) and the Safety Net Program (\$4.5 million). Other funding the mayor wants to axe include \$470,000 for CUNY's Dominican Studies Institute, \$469,000 to its Center for Puerto Rican Studies, and \$335,000 to the Immigration Center at Medgar Evers College.

McCall urged PSC members to contact their City Council representatives. "The City Council has been very good in restoring cuts to the

operating budget," she said. "We want to make sure that continues."

There is about \$100 million in the City's capital budget for CUNY, but it says that \$201 million is needed to cover the City's share of these costs. "We need to get the City to match the State's capital spending," said McCall. "They haven't matched anything for ten years. This year it's really glaring because we have so many needs."

BUSH-WHACKED?

CUNY students will discover this spring whether President Bush's gaping cuts to higher learning get a green light from Congress. For the first time in almost 20 years, the president's proposed education budget allocates less money than in the preceding year. A total of \$4.3 billion in cuts from 48 education programs is scheduled in the White House plan, and many key college programs are slated to take a hit.

Bush wants a 67% reduction to adult literacy efforts under the Workforce Investment Act, a cut from \$570 million to \$200 million in one year. CUNY's GED and ESL programs could lose as much as 50% of their federal funding.

"Bush's proposed federal cuts

would deny thousands of New Yorkers the chance to learn to speak English with greater facility, earn their GEDs, enroll in college and provide more support for their children's education," lamented Steve Hinds, a GED math teacher at LaGuardia Adult Learning Center.

A rally opposing federal cuts to adult literacy programs will be held in Union Square on Friday, April 22 at 10 am (see Calendar, page 4).

Bush proposes a \$500 increase in the maximum size of Pell Grants, over five years. But he links this so-called increase to the total elimination of \$66.1 million in Perkins loans

— which are particularly important for students at CUNY's community colleges — and the gutting of programs for low-income students such as Talent Search and Upward Bound. The net result would be \$10 billion less in federal spending over ten years.

"It's interesting that all three Republicans — the mayor, governor and president — are cutting aid to students who badly need it," said McCall. "they are undermining the American economy by making it harder for us to help people become college graduates."

Lisa Quinones

Several arrested at CCNY protest

By ELLEN BALLEISEN
Bronx Community College

Aggressive security measures questioned

Three City College students were arrested on March 9 during a protest against the presence of military recruiters on campus. The charges ranged from obstructing government administration to assault on a CUNY security officer, but those arrested insist it was security personnel who assaulted them.

Carol Lang, a CCNY secretary who had yelled "let her go" at the officers while one of the students was being arrested, was herself detained two days later. Accused of striking an officer "with an unknown object," Lang was arrested at work and then held for 36 hours before her release.

All four of those arrested were suspended and banned from the campus before any hearing was held, a move that was criticized by CCNY's Faculty Senate. CCNY administration asserted that the immediate suspensions were necessary because those arrested "pose a continuing danger" – including student Justino Rodriguez, who was not charged with assault. Lang, a member of DC 37, was suspended from work without pay.

JOB FAIR

The arrests took place during a campus job fair in Shepard Hall that included military recruiters. A group of about 20 student protesters entered the job fair and began to chant anti-war slogans in front of the Army National Guard table. About two minutes later, private guards from Burns Security and campus security officers both told them to leave. When they refused, the officers surrounded students and ejected them from the job fair.

According to Lang and the students, they continued chanting in a hallway outside but never struck anyone. Lang, who is 54 years old, told *Clarion*, "I'm 4'11" and I'm not crazy. I wouldn't hit an officer." (The arrest report incorrectly gives Lang's height as 5' 5".)

AGGRESSIVE

A City College spokesperson declined to answer questions from *Clarion*, providing only a statement from President Gregory Williams that was e-mailed to CCNY students and employees the day after the protest. "In the corridor outside the Hall, [the students] were told once again that they...must take their protest outside, where they would be free to continue to express their opinions," Williams wrote. "The confrontation escalated and several of the demonstrators grabbed and hit the officer. At this point, the three students involved in the attack on the officer were arrested."

While "every member of the City College community has the right to



Nick Bergreen (center) spoke at a press conference after his release from jail. City College students Bergreen and Justino Rodriguez (at right) were among those arrested in a protest against military recruitment. CCNY professor Bill Crain is at left.

voice his or her opinion," Williams concluded, "we will not tolerate any acts of violence."

But a student unconnected with the protest told *Clarion* that the only violence he observed came from security guards. "One security guard started to scream at the protesters, 'Move, move, move. You can't be here,'" he recalled. "Other security guards [began] screaming at the protesters as well." The guards pushed protesters over to one side of the hallway, he said, and several students were knocked down and lay on the ground. "What shocked me was that the security guards were so aggressive," he explained. "They were dragging people across the floor. I saw a student who was lying on the floor and the three security guards jumped on

his back. They twisted his hands and handcuffed him." The guards' violence did not stop there, he added: "I also saw a girl who was trying to take pictures with her still camera. At least two security guards grabbed her, twisted her hands, and took the camera away. Another security guard was holding a handcuffed protester's head against the wall while...speaking on his walkie-talkie. The protester had blood on his face."

The student gave *Clarion* a written statement but requested anonymity, saying, "I'm afraid. I don't know how City College security works." He said he did not know the protesters, adding, "I'm not an activist, I find activists a little crazy. But after I heard the charges, I thought, truth is being turned to its opposite."

Marie Nazon, a faculty counselor in the SEEK program, attended the job fair and saw the protest inside. She told *Clarion* she believed that

military recruiters had a right to be there and that it was inappropriate for the students to protest inside, rather than outside. But she said that the demonstrators had been "peaceful, not abrasive, with no vile language," and that it was the aggressive attitude of the security guards that changed the atmosphere.

Nazon had planned to testify at a college disciplinary hearing for the students on April 8, and the student witness who spoke to *Clarion* was considering doing so as well. But that hearing was cancelled at the last minute, almost a month after the suspensions were first imposed.

CCNY's Faculty Senate objected to Williams' decision to suspend students and an employee without a hearing. In a March 17 resolution, the Senate called for "an open and thorough investigation of the incident," and said that until such an investigation is carried out, those suspended should "be reinstated to their proper place in the academic community."

UNFAIR

Hadas Thier, one of the arrested students, said Williams had shown he was not interested in a fair investigation. "[He] sent an e-mail to the entire faculty and student body repeating the allegations against us as if they were facts," she said, and did so "without so much as a phone call to see if we were all right, or to find out our side of the story." Thier, originally from Israel, said it had felt strange to be excluded from her campus, unable to attend classes or campus protests against the arrests. "I've tried to stay in touch with my professors," she told *Clarion*, "but it's been hard."

Steve Leberstein, chair of the PSC's City College Chapter, said the college administration's hostility to dissent had been apparent on Febru-

ary 23, when the PSC and CCNY students sponsored a joint demonstration for a good labor contract and against increases in tuition. A large contingent of New York City police and City College security officers ordered the roughly 50 demonstrators to move inside metal police pens, an action that Leberstein called "insulting and provocative." The size of the police presence and the officers' actions were both "totally out of proportion to the situation," he told *Clarion*, and the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Faculty Council has asked Williams for an explanation.

REPRESSION

On March 31 the PSC Delegate Assembly voted to condemn "the repression of political dissent at CCNY." In early April, several City College faculty staged a three-day hunger strike, protesting the arrests and suspensions as a threat to the First Amendment.

The four arrested have all been active in previous "counter-recruitment" activities on campus, and say that their previous success is what led CCNY administration to adopt a harder line. Justino Rodriguez told *Clarion* that on two occasions in the fall, military recruiters at CCNY decided to pack up and leave when faced with peaceful, chanting protesters.

"As tuition goes up, people feel desperate and they think their only option is to join the military," Rodriguez said. City College is targeted by recruiters because of its many poor and working-class students, he argued, and he feels obliged to challenge their sales pitch.

"Dying in Iraq is not a job opportunity," argues Rodriguez. For him, this statement is also personal: his father has done one tour of duty in Iraq with the US Army, and he may be sent there again.

Update: CCNY lifts suspensions

As *Clarion* went to press, CCNY lifted the suspensions for Carol Lang and the three students. All four returned to campus on April 11, with Lang going back on payroll and the students returning to their classes. Their lawyer was in negotiations with both CCNY and the Manhattan District Attorney, seeking to have both administrative and criminal charges dropped.

The students' disciplinary hearing, originally scheduled for April 8, was cancelled. Carol Lang's Step One disciplinary hearing, originally scheduled for April 14, was also cancelled. She will have a Step Two disciplinary hearing at the CUNY Central Office in mid-May.

— EB

CALENDAR

FRIDAY, APRIL 22: 9:30 am – 3:30 pm/ Recapturing the "public" in Public Higher Education. With Jennifer Washburn (see page 10). Registration info at 212-794-5538.

FRIDAY, APRIL 22: 10 am/ Rally to protect NYC adult literacy programs. At Union Square Park in Manhattan. More info at www.glcny.org.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4: 6:00 pm/ Health & Safety Watchdogs meeting. At the PSC office, 25 W. 43rd Street. Contact Bob Wurman, bobwurman@yahoo.com.

FRIDAY, MAY 6: 9:15 am– 5:00 pm/ TIAA-CREF representative Vito Ruvolo at the PSC office. Call Linda Slifkin, 212-354-1252.

FRIDAY, MAY 6: 12 – 5:00 pm/ PSC Junior Faculty Development Day: How to Survive and Thrive at CUNY. Advice on getting tenure and more. At CCNY Center for Worker Education, 99 Hudson St. Contact Jeremy Borenstein, 212-354-1252 or jborenstein@pscmail.org.

FRIDAY, MAY 6: 4:00 pm/ DA Part-time Personnel Committee, at the PSC office, 25 W. 43rd St. Contact Marcia Newfield, 212-354-1252, mnewfield@pscmail.org.

TUESDAY, MAY 17: 4:00 pm/ Women's Committee meeting, at the PSC office. Contact Norah Chase, 212-354-1252, or NChase91@aol.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 28: Deadline for contest, co-sponsored by the *Sankofa Review* and Medgar Evers College, for a free tour in Egypt (including hotel, cruise and meals) from July 23 to August 2. Call Clinton Crawford, 718-756-8904.

RF workers finally vote on union

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Research Foundation workers at the CUNY Graduate Center got some welcome news at the end of March: they will finally get to vote in a union election.

The vote will be held on May 3 and 4. It's been a long time coming – RF workers at the Grad Center have been organizing since May 2003, but the election has been stalled by Research Foundation (RF) objections.

After the regional office of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) issued a ruling ordering a union election last June, RF management filed an appeal. The regional NLRB director then reopened the hearings and asked both sides for more information. On March 31 she ruled that the election should go forward.

Some RF employees are angry about the repeated delays. "It's criminal that the RF is spending the hard-

Grad Center employees waited two years

earned money of the grant procurers on expensive lawyers to deny us the right to make a basic decision," said Robert Sauté, an RF worker and graduate student in sociology.

RF workers say they want a union in order to win tuition remission, job security, and fairer policies on vacation and sick time. Even if an RF employee works on the same project for years, her or his paycheck may be financed by a succession of different grants. As a result, many find that they lose accrued sick or vacation time. They also say they want programs to run smoothly, with transparency and consistency from the RF.

SIDE-BY-SIDE

RF employees may work side-by-side with people whose paychecks

come from CUNY, often doing the same or similar work. Yet they lack the union protections that CUNY employees have had for years. "Whatever type of work you do, it

should be covered by the same rules as everybody else's," said Lorraine Towns, a Science Program Coordinator for nearly four years. "As a worker, my rights have to be protected."

In three previous union elections, RF workers elsewhere at CUNY voted for PSC representation by 85%, 81% and 88%. "The support for the union has been overwhelming," said PSC Associate Executive Director Mary Ann Carlese. As in the recent vote at City Tech, professional employees will have a different, two-part ballot. They will vote on whether they want a union, and

on whether they want to be part of the same bargaining unit with other employees. At City Tech, 94% of professionals voted in favor of all union members being in the same unit.

Election will be held on May 3 & 4

Because about half of RF employees at the Grad Center are graduate students at CUNY, RF management has tried to argue that they cannot join a union. In July, a national NLRB panel ruled that graduate students at private universities do not have a right to unionize, since their work as teaching assistants is allegedly not a job but simply part of their education. The ruling does not apply to public universities such as CUNY, where the Public Employment Relations Board has long recognized graduate student employ-

ees' right to be union members.

The RF has tried to argue that since it is a private foundation, its employees who are grad students may not unionize. In response, the PSC has noted that that CUNY and the RF have long insisted that they are separate employers and that the RF does not grant degrees. The regional director of the NLRB sided with the union, and ordered the May 3 and 4 election.

APPEALS CONTINUE

If the RF decides to file another appeal, the ballots cast by grad students will be impounded after the votes are cast, and will be counted only after the appeal is resolved.

"The RF can stall all it wants," said Irene Meisel, a graduate student at the Center for Media and Learning. "That's all it is – stalling. That's why it's important we all vote."

PSC forum draws mayoral hopefuls

By MANNY NESS
Brooklyn College

Every Democratic and Republican challenger to Mayor Michael Bloomberg took part in a mayoral forum sponsored by the PSC on March 23 at the CUNY Graduate Center. The event drew a crowd of 150 PSC members, students, and members of other unions.

There was lively discussion of citywide issues, from affordable housing and public transportation to Bloomberg's stadium scheme. But most of the audience's questions focused on issues specific to higher education and to municipal labor.

ANTHONY WEINER

Congressman Anthony Weiner cited his mother's 35 years as a teacher, and expressed general support for higher pay for educators. "We have to negotiate for raises," Weiner said. "They deserve to be paid more."

When a member of the Transit Workers Union asked if workers should have the right to strike, Weiner answered, "People should have the opportunity to strike, [but] obviously not in violation of the Taylor Law" – which bans strikes by all of New York's public employees.

On the issue of academic freedom, Weiner was asked if he supported the NYC Education Department's decision to ban Professor Rashid Khalidi of Columbia from future participation in its teacher education programs. "I wouldn't have hired him in the first place," responded Weiner.

Focus on CUNY, union issues

GIFFORD MILLER

City Council Speaker Gifford Miller emphasized how he has moved efforts to fund CUNY through the City Council. "I think CUNY is a huge portion of the solution to our problems – whether it's jobs, whether it's economic justice or being more competitive," Miller said.

On labor negotiations, Miller did not disavow the concept of pattern bargaining but suggested his interpretation would be more flexible.

Miller did not support repeal of the Taylor Law, but called it "one-sided and unfair as it is currently written." The process today is "so unbalanced that the mayor can just choose not to negotiate," he said.

As mayor, Miller was asked, would he bring part-time CUNY employees into the City health insurance plan like other part-time City workers? While non-committal, Miller commented that "it's no benefit to the City of New York when workers who are working for the City don't have health benefits.... They'll eventually end up in our public hospitals."

C. VIRGINIA FIELDS

Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields extolled CUNY for providing a high-quality education despite lack of funding. "When you look at the fact that average SAT scores are going up...that's the good news," Fields said, also praising CUNY's two recent Rhodes scholars.



Anthony Weiner



C. Virginia Fields



Fernando Ferrer



Gifford Miller

having their personal information given to recruiters.

FERNANDO FERRER

Ferrer, who was endorsed by the PSC in the last mayoral election, said, "I consider the future of the City and CUNY as inseparable." He criticized the fact that CUNY community college tuition is "among the highest in the land," and said New York cannot afford such "barriers to open opportunity."

On contract negotiations, Ferrer drew applause when he said, "To put a proposal on the table that is lower than the rate of inflation is simply saying, 'Work for less.'"

Told that starting pay for CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP) instructors has not gone up

in 10 years (from \$36,000), Ferrer said that "if we want to build a great university," this is bad policy. "I just don't think it's right," he said.

Asked about his recent comments that the shooting of Amadou Diallo by police was not a crime, Ferrer said "it was a bad shooting" that showed "a failure in policing policy" that went all the way up to then-Mayor Giuliani. He said he had fought for police reform, even "submitting myself to voluntary arrest."

TOM OGNIBENE

Former City Councilman Tom Ognibene, challenging Bloomberg for the Republican nomination, said he expects to run on the Conservative Party line in November even if he loses the GOP primary.

Ognibene praised "our great mayor, Rudy Giuliani" for "raising the standards" at CUNY. With students meeting those standards, Ognibene said, he believes in principle that CUNY tuition should be free – "that was the original deal" – but he said he does not believe the City has the resources to reach that goal today. "The only thing I can promise you," he said, "is that if I am mayor, education will be a priority."

STEVEN SHAW

Another Republican candidate, Steven Shaw, has never held elective office. Shaw emphasized his opposition to what he called NYC's "oppressive tax structure."

Mayor Bloomberg was invited and his staff said that he would like to attend. In the end he was not able to come, but promised to meet with the union's leadership.

Cecelia McCall, coordinator of the union's Legislative Committee, said that the event reflected the PSC's growing political strength. "As Councilman Bill Perkins said recently, 'The PSC has built a constituency for CUNY,'" said McCall

Photos: Gary Scholinger

How CUNY is underfunding the Welfare Fund

By PETER HOGNESS

In a March 21 open letter, Chancellor Goldstein declared that “the University has not underfunded the Welfare Fund.” But the numbers tell a different story.

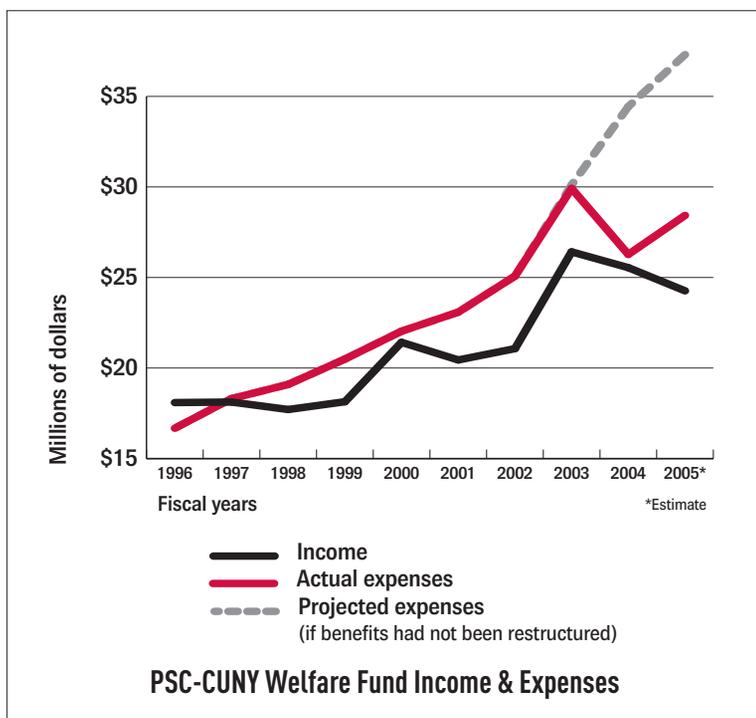
As these graphs show, the Welfare Fund is on the brink of insolvency. The reason is simple: CUNY’s contributions are not enough to cover the costs of current benefits. The gap between the two is large. Before the end of this summer, that gap will have to be closed in one of two ways: by increasing CUNY’s contributions, or by shifting even more costs onto members, effectively cutting benefits.

In contract talks, CUNY management negotiators have suggested that the Fund cut benefits – start-

ing with retirees (who typically have higher prescription drug costs than other members) and adjuncts (whose basic health insurance depends on a separate contribution stream from CUNY). For each group, CUNY contributes substantially less than their benefits cost. Union negotiators have rejected this idea, and are demanding that CUNY contribute enough to the Fund so that benefits can be not only maintained, but improved.

Despite the WF Trustees’ decision two years ago to reduce funding of the dental benefit and to shift a larger share of drug costs to members, the Fund’s reserves are almost gone. If benefit cuts are to be avoided, CUNY must pay more. Trying to deny these facts won’t make them go away.

CUNY pays less than benefits cost



In almost every one of the last ten years, CUNY has contributed less to the Welfare Fund than the cost of benefits. This ongoing shortfall has created a financial crisis for the Welfare Fund, and has forced it to use reserves to cover deficits.

The fact that CUNY’s contributions consistently fall short of expenses forced the Welfare Fund to restructure benefits in 2003. Restructuring helped contain costs, as shown in the chart above – those changes saved an estimated \$8.2 mil-

lion in projected expenses in FY 2004 alone. While about half of these savings came from making the Fund more efficient, half stemmed from the simple fact that members now pay more of the costs.

But members’ sacrifices have not solved the problem. In 2004/2005, the high rate of increase in prescription drug prices (currently estimated at 18% per year) pushed the Fund’s expenses back up again. CUNY’s contribution rates, however, increased very little.

[Figures for 2005 are estimates. Income figures reflect some short-term fluctuations, such as a one-time additional contribution by CUNY in 2003 to make up for past underpayments.]

CUNY moves but

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Over and over, CUNY management negotiators had insisted that they would not offer more than 1.5% unless the union first reduced its own demands. But on March 17, they yielded and came to the table with a higher offer, even without PSC concessions.

Union leaders credit member action with forcing CUNY’s shift in position. “Because of the pressure applied by people in this room, and many others, they did come with an improved offer,” PSC President Barbara Bowen told the March 31 Delegate Assembly.

But CUNY’s offer is still a recipe for austerity, said the union’s bargaining team. At 6.25% compounded over four years, CUNY’s latest package would still mean raises that fall below the increased cost of living – in real terms, a pay cut. It would not

Raises below inflation, no

solve the Welfare Fund crisis, and does not address the need for improvements in equity and working conditions.

“While the exchange of comprehensive packages represents a different level of engagement,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen, “there is no justification for starting from the position that improvements are out of the question” – especially given this year’s \$2.5 billion surplus in the New York City budget.

SALARIES

CUNY’s offer on salaries is 6.25% compounded over four years, plus a 1% self-funded “productivity increase” that would be dependent on members doing additional work.

The PSC counterproposal, made on March 22, also covers four years: it includes a 2% increase for the Welfare Fund, across-the-board salary increases worth 10.6% plus an \$800 increase in base salary for all, and a \$500 longevity increase. Of the across-the-board increases, 1% would go toward union economic demands such as sabbaticals at 75% of full pay and paid parental leave.

“We’ve taken the best features of the UUP-SUNY agreement and proposed a combination of percentage and cash increases,” Bowen explained. “Percentages alone would widen the gap between highest- and lowest-paid members, whereas cash increases to base salary contribute to equity.”

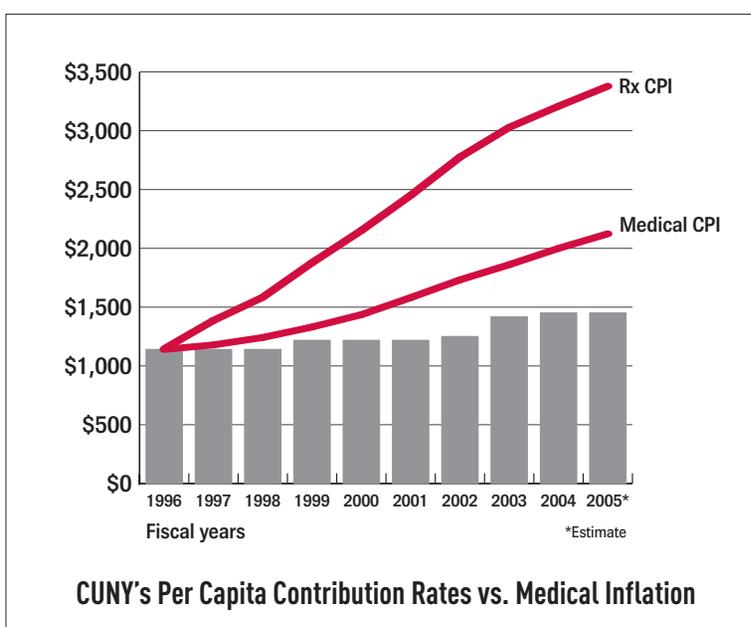
The PSC has made an innovative proposal on part-time salaries, which would significantly boost the adjunct faculty salary scale. Currently, adjunct faculty get a paid office hour if they teach six hours at a single campus. The PSC plan would attach unpaid office time to all adjunct teaching – but would increase adjunct wages to a level that would more than compensate for the change.

Bargaining team members say the proposal acknowledges work that



The PSC will run 30-second television ads featuring union members beginning April 15. “An investment in us is an investment in CUNY,” says the narrator, as photos of faculty and staff in the classroom, with names and years of service, fill the screen. The 30-second ads will run mostly on cable stations, including CNN, MSNBC, NY1, WCBS and WABC. See it at www.psc-cuny.org.

CUNY’s contributions don’t come close

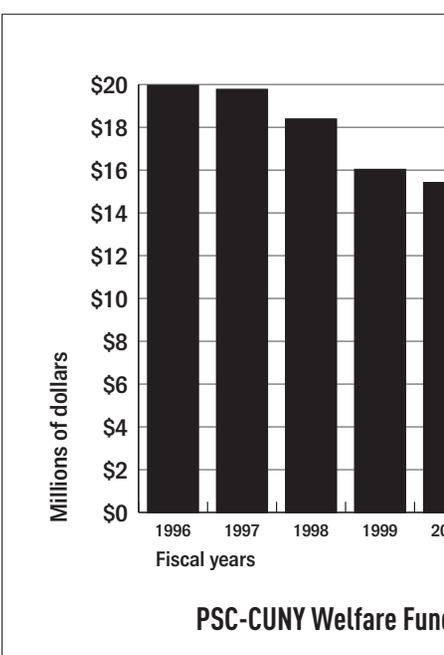


The last contract increased CUNY’s annual contributions to the Welfare Fund by \$200 per member. A July 2004 agreement between municipal unions and New York City added \$65 per member, but this has not

kept up with steep increases in health care costs. Prescription drug costs, by far the largest factor in Welfare Fund expenses, have gone up fastest – and CUNY’s contribution rate has lagged far behind.

[Above, the growing gap between what CUNY pays the Welfare Fund and the rising costs of health care and prescription drugs. CPI = Consumer Price Index. Figures for CUNY’s contributions are a weighted average of contribution rates for retired and active members; each CPI applied to avg. for 1996.]

The Fund’s reserves



Inadequate contributions by CUNY have forced the Fund to use up its reserves. The constant gap between benefit costs and CUNY’s contribution rates has required the Welfare Fund to draw on those reserve funds year after year. Now the re-

[Above, summary of year-end reserve balances. The Fund has spent down its reserves to dangerously low levels and will not maintain a balance equal to 12 months of ex-

still falls short

WF solution

adjunct faculty already do. “The people have been professional, but this would make the structure more professional,” said Marcia Newfield, who serves on the bargaining team.

“This is an enhancement for students, because they need that time with their professors,” Bowen added.

WELFARE FUND

At the start of the new contract, CUNY’s offer would include an \$800 one-time cash contribution to the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund (WF) for each full-time employee, pro-rated for part-timers. As a one-time payment, however, this would not help to close the gap between the WF’s expenses and its ongoing income – and this lump-sum payment would soon be eaten up by the ongoing deficit.

Management says it would consider a larger one-time payment, but only if the additional amount is subtracted from the retroactive pay from the second year.

The PSC proposal puts more money into the Welfare Fund at the start of a new agreement, and does so in a more effective way. “Instead of a one-time cash payment to the WF, our proposal would put a rate increase – a recur-

ring amount – into the Fund,” said Bowen. Since the existing contract expired in November 2002, the PSC proposal calls for CUNY to pay the first two years of that rate increase to the WF immediately, in order to bolster the Fund’s reserves.

The Welfare Fund rate increase proposed by the PSC for the beginning of the contract would be equal to 1.25% of payroll, and the union calls for CUNY to make a second rate increase, equal to 0.75% of payroll, in the contract’s final year.

Under CUNY’s proposal, its regular contributions would not rise until late in the third year of the agreement. Then they would go up by \$100 per capita, an increase that is repeated a year later. The increase in the WF’s income would be substantially smaller than in the PSC proposal.

In a March 21 letter to employees, Chancellor Goldstein said he wanted to “clear up some misconceptions” about CUNY and the Welfare Fund. “The University does not have a demand on the bargaining table to cut benefits for retirees” or other employees, the chancellor declared.

While CUNY has not presented a formal demand for benefit cuts, its current proposal would make them inevitable: the amount of money

CUNY has so far offered for the WF is not enough to pay for current benefits.

EQUITY

Some of the best news for the PSC in CUNY’s new proposal is that management dropped its aggressive push to slash job security for Higher Education Officer titles in its new proposal. “No concessions on Article 13.3b was a union priority,” Bowen said. But defining the priority as holding the line against concessions meant that the union had to scale back its proposal on promotions and drop, for this round, its proposal on paid overtime for HEOs. The PSC continues, however, to demand presidential reasons when those in HEO titles are not reappointed.

The two sides reached tentative agreements on additional re-assigned time for research for new library and counseling faculty, and came closer on proposals to reduce the teaching load at New York City Tech, currently the highest of any CUNY senior college. This progress, however, remains tentative until a final agreement is reached.

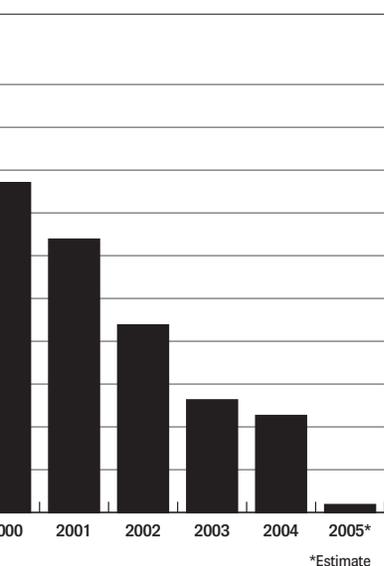
At press time, the PSC bargaining team was waiting for a response from CUNY to the union’s counterproposal.



More than 100 Brooklyn College members and students rallied for a fair contract and against tuition hikes on March 26.

Peter Hogness

es are almost gone



d Depletion of Reserves

erves are almost gone, despite benefit changes that were made to contain costs. Unless CUNY contributes more – and soon – cuts in benefit coverage will be unavoidable.

nces show how the Welfare Fund has had to levels. Experts recommend that benefit funds expenses. The WF last met this level in 1998.]

Members nix ‘austerity framework’

By DANIA RAJENDRA

With new and creative tactics, PSC members continued their response to the state of emergency in contract negotiations. Campus rallies, street theater, a “town meeting” and picketing by a “flying squad” were among the tools that members used to press for a fair contract.

Union members were vocal in rejecting CUNY management’s latest contract offer, which would leave Welfare Fund benefits in danger and lose ground in salaries. The local protests in March and early April helped organize for a union-wide demonstration on April 19, at the office of Board of Trustees Chair Benno Schmidt.

FAT CATS

The union’s Delegate Assembly, which declared the state of emergency in bargaining in January, moved at the end of March to establish a Union Defense Fund. The Fund is a voluntary fundraising effort for an intensified and more militant contract fight. “We have seen that our pressure works,” the DA resolution states, “but we will need to be prepared to press even harder

Acting on state of emergency

to break through management’s austerity framework.”

A series of local actions kicked off on March 26, when more than 100 members and students rallied together at Brooklyn College for a fair contract and against increases in tuition. “We [students] need to think about this as, ‘This is my contract!’” Ali Chaudary, a senior majoring in psychology, said at the demonstration. “If our professors are worrying about paying the rent, or health insurance, how can they give a good lecture, or concentrate on helping me?”

The Brooklyn rally also featured a bit of street theater. CUNY “fat cats” – complete with paunch, ears and tail – handed out flyers with suggestions such as, “CUNY faculty and staff: if you need more money, get a second job.” Student performers rattled cups, panhandling for tuition for themselves and health care or child care for their professors.

March 27 was CUNY Day, as established by the NYC City Council four years ago, and the PSC chapter

at Bronx Community College marked the day with a “town meeting” on contract negotiations. Twenty PSC members and a student took a turn at the microphone to testify on the urgent need for CUNY to invest in the people who do the work of education. “The attitude of administrators at 80th Street is that faculty, staff and students are an irritant, a bother – instead of their reason for being,” said union delegate Ben Carney.

The PSC chapter at LaGuardia presented a documentary about open admissions, attracting an audience of students, faculty and staff who discussed the contract fight. Other CUNY Day actions included a large rally at BMCC, co-sponsored with student groups, informational picketing at Queensborough and Queens, and information tables and leafleting at City Tech.

Chapter meetings to discuss the status of negotiations were held over the next several days at York, Baruch, Lehman, KCC, City, Hunter and John Jay, with turnout general-

ly far above average. Chapters continued to participate in the “My Five” one-to-one organizing program and made weekly calls to management decision-makers on “Contract Wednesdays.” BoT Chair Schmidt, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and Mayor Michael Bloomberg were all targeted in March and April.

NEW TACTICS

In a new tactic, a “flying squad” of PSC picketers welcomed Chancellor Goldstein at City Tech on April 5, when he arrived to testify before the State Regents on CUNY’s new Master Plan. In his testimony, Goldstein praised CUNY’s faculty and staff – but PSC activists gave all who attended a leaflet that said, “Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, talk is cheap – we need a contract!”

As preparations began for the April 19 rally at Schmidt’s office in midtown Manhattan, the union also launched a drive to ask members to contribute to the new Union Defense Fund. The Delegate Assembly voted to establish the Fund to “expand the union’s capacity to wage a public, militant campaign for a fair contract.” (See pages 11 and 12 for details.)

Membership and leadership ratchet up the pressure

Summer school for union women

By MARCIA NEWFIELD

The five-day Northeast Regional Summer Institute for Union Women is a whirlwind for those who attend, one that leaves an indelible impression.

At 8:30 every morning, more than 100 participants gather to preview the day's events and sing "Solidarity Forever" in one of three languages. Then we rush off to workshops on collective bargaining, legal rights, public speaking and leadership skills. There are lunchtime meetings, followed by afternoon sessions on writing for union work, using the internet or combating domestic violence. Evening events include guest speakers and a dramatic slide show documenting the achievements of women in the labor movement. For homework, we analyze our own union contract structures and by laws, write articles for the school newsletter, and practice for the Institute chorus.

AWARENESS

Alex Tarasko, professor of nursing and a union grievance counselor at Queensborough Community College, attended in 2002. She sums it up this way: "Being introduced to the history of the labor movement from a woman's perspective and seeing women who fought for the rights of workers created a shift in my awareness and consciousness. I felt empowered, and when I came back in the fall, I was tuned in to the labor issues [of] women on the campus....And because I came to the Institute with a HEO, an adjunct, and a CLT from CUNY, I received an education from them about their labor concerns."

Tarasko is one of 17 faculty and staff whose attendance the PSC has sponsored since 2001, when Debra Bergen, the PSC's director of contract administration, introduced the Institute to the union's newly elect-

Northeast Institute part of labor, women's history



Established in 1921, the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Working Women helped inspire today's union women summer schools.

ed leadership. Bergen first attended as a student in 1987, and since 2000 has been on the faculty, teaching leadership skills and advanced grievance training. Each year the Institute is led by two co-coordinators, one from academia and one from the union movement. Bergen was chosen as the labor co-coordinator for 2003.

ROOTS GO BACK

This summer, the Institute will hold its 30th annual session. But while the Institute was established 30 years ago, in many ways its roots go back much further. It was inspired in part by earlier university-

based educational projects for working-class women, such as the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers.

The Bryn Mawr school was formed in 1921, shortly after women won the right to vote. College President Martha Carey Thomas, Dean Hilda Smith and YWCA leaders wanted to give women factory workers an opportunity to "widen their influence in the industrial world." As Thomas wrote, "The peculiar kind of sympathy that binds women together seems to come only to those who have not been free. It belongs at the present time to all women because

of their age-long struggle, which is not yet over, for human rights and personal civil liberty." This pro-union space for learning survived for 17 years and spawned many other residential workers' schools in the United States.

A modern successor to the Bryn Mawr Summer School, the Northeast Regional Summer Institute for Union Women was conceived in 1975 by the late labor educator Barbara Wertheimer, author of several well-respected books including *We Were There: The Story of Working Women in America from Pre-Colonial Times to the Early 20th Century* and *Labor Education for Women Workers*.

The Institute's goal is to bring together labor educators, union leaders, and rank-and-file members to help strengthen women's knowledge of the US labor movement, understand its present challenges and issues, and develop skills that motivate them to be more active union members in an atmosphere of sisterhood and solidarity.

PSC attendees have realized that promise, and have brought the lessons of the Institute back to CUNY. Maria Doherty, a PSC organizer, says she has used techniques she learned at the Institute to orga-

Building skills and knowledge of labor

nize Research Foundation workers at LaGuardia Community College. Ellen Steinberg, a CLT chapter officer, commented, "What I got was a sense of solidarity with other union women, and inspiration to impart my enthusiasm and activism to others." HEO Vera Weekes called the summer school "truly a life-changing experience."

Helen Creedon, a PSC member who teaches at the Hunter College Campus Schools, said, "I have attended many schools and confer-

ences, yet never felt the level of acceptance, warmth and support as I did that week from such a diverse group of women. My five-year-old can now sing, 'The union makes us strong.' She also enjoys *Click, Clack, Moo*, the children's book on how the farm animals organize and use the typewriter" to tell the farmer what they need.

Debbie Parker, director of the Women's Center at BMCC, was inspired to import the Women's Labor History slide show for a women's history event on March 10, where retail workers' union leader Ida Torres, an Institute founder who is now treasurer of the New York Central Labor Council, spoke, along with PSC President Barbara Bowen.

MANY VOICES

This summer's Northeast Regional Summer Institute for Union Women will be held at Cornell University in Ithaca from August 7 to 12, with the theme of "One World - Many Voices of Union Women." Co-sponsors are United Association of Labor Educators (UALE), the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), and the AFL-CIO. Locals of major unions in the northeast, including AFSCME, CWA, SEIU, TWU and the UAW, are all expected to send students. UALE is also sponsoring three other schools for union women this summer (information at www.uale.org).

For a brochure and more information on the Northeast Institute, contact Debra Bergen at dbergen@psc-mail.org, or 212-354-1252.

Marcia Newfield, PSC VP for part-time personnel and adjunct grievance counselor, has attended the Institute since 2002. She became interested in the portrayal of labor in children's literature, and in 2003, along with teaching a workshop on writing for union work, offered a mini-workshop on teaching labor to kids.

Belle Zeller Fund parts ways with PSC

By PETER HOGNESS

"With deep regret," PSC staff resigned in March from their positions with the Belle Zeller Scholarship Trust Fund. They acted after the Fund's board insisted on appointing a trustee who refuses to join the union.

The scholarship fund was created by the PSC in 1979 in honor of Belle Zeller, the union's founding president and a committed trade unionist. Criteria for the annual awards include both academic achievement and service to the community.

The trustees' choice of a faculty member "who has consciously cho-

Insists on non-union trustee

sen not to join the union constitutes an act of such disrespect to the PSC/CUNY and to the memory of Belle Zeller that we can no longer serve as staff support to the trustees," stated PSC Executive Director Deborah Bell and Pension and Welfare Benefits Director Clarissa Gilbert Weiss, in a letter of resignation on March 17. PSC staff had done most of the Fund's administrative work and organized its annual fundraising dinner.

Shirley Beheshti, chair of the Fund's board, told *Clarion* that "the

sole function" of the Fund "is to award scholarships to deserving students, according to our criteria." Therefore, she said, "the Board of Trustees consists of people who can best identify such students with no reference to their political views, whether they are members of the union or fee payers, Republicans or Democrats."

The non-union appointment came after years of friction between the Fund's board and the PSC. For the last several years, the self-selecting board had rejected all PSC nomina-

tions for Fund trustees. The union nonetheless continued to support the Fund; Bell and Weiss's letter notes that the PSC "has subsidized the Trust Fund's fundraising and scholarship application processing work for the past 27 years."

"The PSC Executive Council took our responsibility to nominate trustees very seriously," said PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall. "This year we nominated a member from a chapter that had expressed particular interest in promoting the Belle Zeller Scholarships, a young faculty member who was extremely well quali-

fied and very interested in the mission of the Fund."

"We have never had a fee payer as a trustee in the entire 25-year history of the Fund," said Irwin Yellowitz, a member of the Fund's board who also serves as its treasurer.

A scholarship established to honor a lifelong unionist

"In my mind it runs counter to the basic spirit of the Belle Zeller Fund, which was set up to honor the first PSC president and a person who was a lifelong unionist." Yellowitz called the move "a very great mistake on the part of the trustees," and "an act that will be to the great disadvantage of the students."

Direct-to-consumer marketing boom

Drug ads may be harmful to your health

By FRANCINE BREWER & PETER HOGNESS

If you watch television, you've certainly seen them. Very attractive people (who don't look sick) are shown in bucolic settings, living pain-free, symptom-free, disease-free lives. These ads suggest that if you ask your doctor for a certain drug, you will also live a wonderful life. Direct-to-consumer drug ads are beautiful, filmed in bright, cheerful colors. They are designed by the best advertising agencies, and they produce results.

Major pharmaceutical companies (Merck, Pfizer and others) spend \$4 billion a year on direct-to-consumer advertising. They're not doing it for their health – or for yours. The purpose of all that spending is to stimulate sales of the drugs that yield the highest profits.

BAD RESULTS

The results can be bad for individual patients, and for the entire health care system. New Zealand is planning to ban direct-to-consumer drug ads – which will leave the US as the only industrialized country where they are allowed.

Direct-to-consumer advertising began in earnest in 1997, when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) changed its rules. "No longer would the FDA require... voluminous information about the drug's side effects in television and radio ads," explains the pharmaceutical industry group PhRMA. Since then spending on direct-to-consumer ads has boomed, growing more than five-fold since 1996.

Many people believe that drug advertising is well regulated. They are mistaken. One study found that half

of respondents thought that the FDA must approve drug ads before they are shown. This is not the case, and FDA efforts to monitor the flood

YOUR HEALTH

of television ads have been understaffed and underfunded.

The number of FDA enforcement actions has steadily declined in recent years. In 2002 – 2004, the FDA sent out 70% fewer warning and violation notices than in the previous three years.

"In the rare cases where the FDA took action... there were long delays," a report by House Democrats concluded earlier this year. In 2003, the average delay between the appearance of a false or misleading ad and the FDA's first action was 177 days – almost six months.

Even ads that do not draw an FDA complaint can be harmful to patients' health. One example is the arthritis pain medication Vioxx: in 2000, its maker Merck spent \$160 million on consumer ads for Vioxx, more than was spent on advertising for Budweiser or for Pepsi. The results were impressive: retail sales of Vioxx grew four-fold in just one year, reaching \$1.5 billion in 2000.

PUSHING VIOXX

But Merck was forced to withdraw Vioxx from the market in September 2004 due to studies showing a substantial increase in risk of cardiovascular problems (heart attacks and strokes) if patients took the drug for 18 months or more. There had been evidence for the heart at-

tack link as early as 2000, and for many patients Vioxx – an expensive drug – offered little or no more benefit than over-the-counter medicines like aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve).

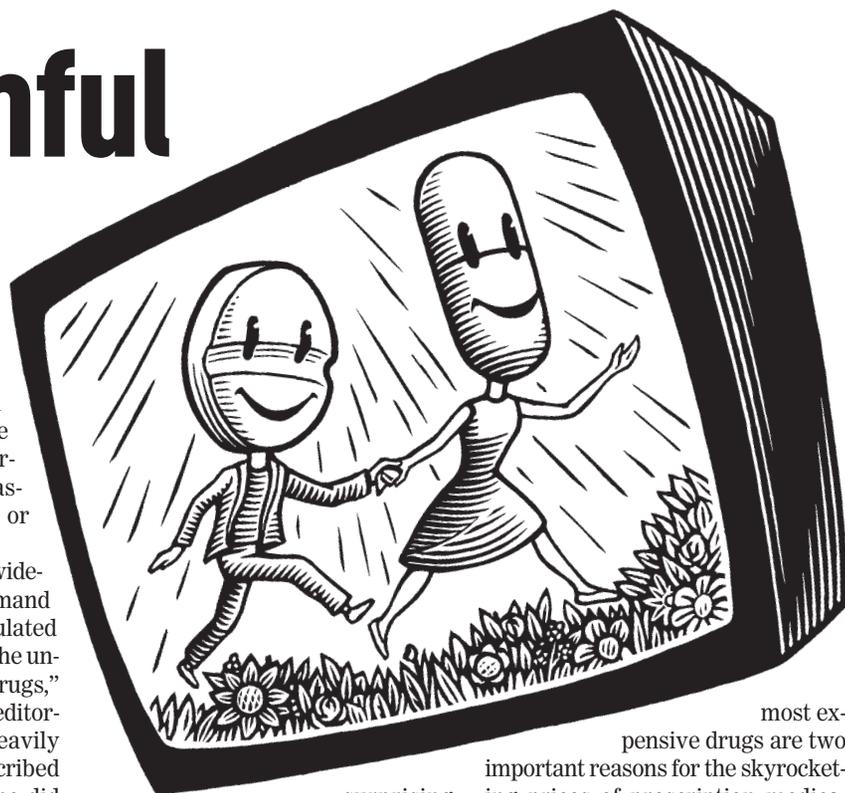
Would Vioxx have been so widely prescribed and taken if demand had not been artificially stimulated by direct-to-consumer ads? "The underlying problem with these drugs," concluded a *New York Times* editorial, "is that they have been heavily promoted and thus prescribed promiscuously to patients who did not need to take them."

But doctors are in a difficult position when a patient wants to take a drug (perhaps influenced by those beautiful ads). "Many of these patients are already convinced that the products advertised are the answer to their problems – and they mistrust [their doctor] if [the doctor] says otherwise," noted an article in the journal of the American College of Physicians (ACP).

When prescription drugs are marketed like other consumer products, patients start to think of buying a drug as just another consumer choice. "Patients almost feel that the physician's office is the drive-through window at McDonald's, where they put their order in and you fill it," a Kentucky physician told the ACP.

If the doctor refuses to prescribe a drug, the patient may go to another physician to obtain it. In a study published in the *Journal of Family Practice*, one-quarter of those interviewed said they would do so – and 15% would consider changing to a new doctor for good. It is thus not

They're good for company profits, but bad for viewers.



Gregory Nemeec

most expensive drugs are two important reasons for the skyrocketing prices of prescription medications. The charts on page 6 of this issue of *Clarion* show how this has hurt the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund.

surprising that the drugs that are most heavily prescribed are those most heavily marketed to consumers, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control.

MISLEADING

The pharmaceutical industry group PhRMA argues that direct-to-consumer drug advertising is educational – that it "enhances consumer knowledge about diseases and treatments." Dr. Marcia Angell, former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, disagrees. These ads "mainly benefit the bottom line of the drug industry, not the public," she wrote in *The New Republic*. "They mislead consumers more than they inform them, and they pressure physicians to prescribe new, expensive and often marginally helpful drugs, although a more conservative option might be better for the patient. That is probably why direct-to-consumer ads are not permitted in other advanced countries less in the thrall of the pharmaceutical industry."

The billions of dollars spent on advertising and the over-selling of the

Where, then, can you get reliable information about different drugs? How can you educate yourself about the appropriateness of a particular medication for your use? With the support from the AFL-CIO and other pro-consumer groups, *Consumer Reports* has launched a website designed to do just that, www.crbest-buydrugs.org. Other good sources of unbiased information include the book *Worst Pills, Best Pills* and the related website, www.worstpills.org, both from Public Citizen. (For information and a laugh, see www.prescriptionforchange.org.)

It often takes years before a safety warning is added to a drug's label or it is withdrawn from the market. Forget those beautiful TV ads – if you have questions about medicine and your health, consult your doctor and do your own research.

Francine Brewer is a member of the PSC Health Care Reform Committee. To contact the committee, write to frangail@earthlink.net.

Fall calendar is settled

By DEBORAH BELL
PSC Executive Director

The Fall 2005 academic calendar has finally been resolved. CUNY management's proposed calendar included three days of no classes in October for Rosh Hashanah, which would not allow for 15 weeks of classes and a full exam period before Christmas. Therefore, CUNY proposed starting Fall semester on August 29, one day earlier than the contractual end of the full-time faculty's annual leave period.

Because the summer annual leave period is a provision of the

PSC contract, CUNY must negotiate with the union about changing it. In bargaining for a new contract, management has proposed a permanent change in annual leave, with faculty returning earlier in August. PSC negotiators argue that the summer annual leave period is crucial for scholarly work, given CUNY's teaching load, and should not be reduced.

On CUNY's proposal for the Fall 2005 schedule, the PSC responded by insisting that full-time faculty be compensated for returning one day

early. After several months of discussion and threats to extend Fall semester into January, a settlement was reached.

Schedule changes for Rosh Hashanah

For Fall 2005, Monday classes scheduled to end after 4 pm will begin on August 29. All other classes will begin August 30. Full-time faculty who teach on August 29 will be compensated at the appropriate adjunct rate for time worked that day. On Monday, October 3, the first night of Rosh Hashanah, all classes ending before 4 pm will be held, and all classes ending after 4 pm will not.

PSC PRE-RETIREMENT CONFERENCE

The annual PSC Pre-Retirement Conference will be held on Wednesday, May 18, 2005, from 9 to 4 at the CUNY Graduate Center. This conference, designed for members who are about five years away from retirement, will feature speakers on financial planning, health benefits and taxes. Please return the form below. Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

I will attend the PSC Pre-Retirement Conference.

Enclosed is \$_____ registration fee for _____ places at \$20 each.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Retirement System _____ College _____

Date of original CUNY employment _____

Make checks payable to Professional Staff Congress and return by May 11, 2005 to: Clarissa Gilbert Weiss, PSC, 25 W. 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036.

BOOK REVIEW

Academia for sale?

By RENATE BRIDENTHAL
Brooklyn College (emerita)

University, Inc: The Corporate Corruption of Higher Education. By Jennifer Washburn. Basic Books, 2005, 326 pp., \$26.00.

This stunning study of how the commercial ethos in universities has subverted the values of humanism and the public good is a chilling heads-up for anyone involved in higher education. Jennifer Washburn has accumulated an alarming amount of information about the consequences of the intrusion of the market into research universities. Not only are academic activities skewed in the interests of profit, but the public at large is also cheated and sometimes harmed.

Washburn's chief focus is to show how the corporate stranglehold on academic science, particularly in medicine, pharmacology and biotechnology, has sacrificed basic research and even integrity to industry's short-term bottom line. Here are some of her examples:

■ In the 1990s, the tobacco industry paid academic scientists up to \$20,000 each to publicly downplay the risks of smoking.

■ The Enron Corporation financed the Harvard Electricity Policy Group, which wrote 31 reports promoting deregulation of California's energy markets.

■ At Brown University, Microfibres Inc. tried to prevent Dr. David Kern from publishing his findings on a potentially fatal lung disease that affected workers at its factory. Microfibres was being asked to donate to a new project for Brown Medical School, and the Brown administration told Kern not to publish or present his work. After protest, Brown backed off and Kern presented his results at a conference – but a few days later, his position at Brown was eliminated.

■ Also at Brown, it was revealed that Dr. Martin Keller, lead author of a study endorsing the safety and effectiveness of the anti-depressant Paxil, was paid over half a million dollars in a single year in consulting fees from drug companies. One of the companies was the maker of Paxil, later identified as potentially inducing suicide among teenagers.

NOVARTIS GETS A VOTE

Increasingly, corporate influence goes beyond exerting pressure from the outside. Novartis, the Swiss-based multinational pharmaceutical company and producer of genetically engineered crops, signed an agreement in 1998 with the University of California at Berkeley to fund research in its Department of Plant and Microbial Biology. In return, Novartis got the first right to negotiate licenses on one-third of the discoveries, whether funded by its donations or by taxpayers' money. Novartis also got two of five seats on the departmental committee that determined how the money would be spent; the three university appointees all received large research awards from the firm. An external review by a team from Michigan State University concluded that such agreements should not be repeated because they created conflicts of interest for the university as an institution.

Such concerns were amplified when a leading opponent of the Novartis deal was

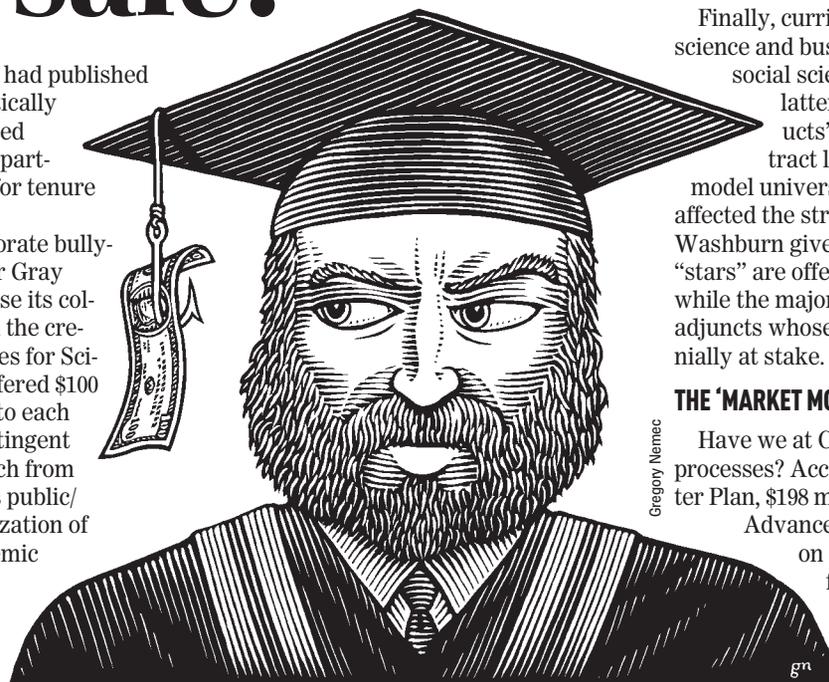
denied tenure at Berkeley. He had published research indicating that genetically modified corn had contaminated native maize in Mexico; his department had recommended him for tenure by a vote of 32-1.

Despite this and other corporate bullying at UC campuses, Governor Gray Davis pushed for UC to increase its collaboration with industry, with the creation of the California Institutes for Science and Innovation. Davis offered \$100 million a year in public funds to each of four new UC institutes, contingent on each raising twice that much from other sources. The goal of this public/private project is commercialization of discoveries through the academic integration of venture-capital management and business incubators, with industrial parks intertwined with university research facilities.

PUBLIC FUNDING IS CUT

"When these expensive commercial-research centers were being launched," Washburn writes, "state spending on the UC system declined by 14 percent, even as enrollment climbed 18 percent."

Washburn knows that university-based research in the US has often tended toward utility, originally through land grants for agricultural colleges and later for war-related research. But, she argues that 1980 legislation, the University Small Business Patent Procedures Act, or Bayh-Dole Act, which permitted universities to patent and license



Gregory Nemec

federally sponsored (taxpayer-financed) research on a large scale, has led to a new paradigm, a "market-model university," that increasingly puts short-term profit ahead of humanistic education and basic research.

The more public universities are starved of public funds, the more they will find private resources tempting. But the intellectual and moral costs are high. Secrecy has enclosed the scientific commons. Intellectual property battles have led to charges of stealing research and the abuse of junior scien-

tists and students. Distorted research results injure the general public and create distrust of university work.

Finally, curricula are distorted to favor science and business, while humanities and social sciences wither. In general, the latter fields have fewer "products" to market and therefore attract less funding in a "market-model university." This model has already affected the structure of the professoriate. Washburn gives NYU as an example, where "stars" are offered salaries in six figures, while the majority of classes are taught by adjuncts whose academic freedom is perennially at stake.

THE 'MARKET MODEL'

Have we at CUNY been affected by these processes? According to the 2004 - 2008 Master Plan, \$198 million will go to building an Advanced Science Research Center on the City College campus. Its focus is to be biosensing, technologies that can be used for the identification, monitoring, and/or control of biologic phenomena. While this has some medical uses, expected external collaborators include Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and IBM. Some of us ought to do some Washburn-type research about all that.

Editor's note: Jennifer Washburn will be the featured speaker at the April 22 UFS conference, "Recapturing the 'Public' in Public Higher Education," 9:30 - 3:00 at the CUNY Graduate Center. To register, call 212-794-5538 or e-mail Vernice.Blanchard@mail.cuny.edu.

Corporate influence is growing.

CONTRACT FIGHT

Political support for PSC contract needs

The following letter, addressed to Chancellor Goldstein and the Trustees of the City University of New York, was signed by 45 elected officials prior to management's latest contract offer.

As a member of the New York City delegation, I write in support of the 20,000 members of the Professional Staff Congress, the faculty and professional staff at the City University of New York. The PSC's contract with CUNY expired more than two years ago, and the instructional staff has gone more than three years without a raise.

While it would not be appropriate for me to become involved in the details of collective bargaining, I wish to express my support for a fair and speedy resolution of the contract. If there has been a renaissance at CUNY, it is primarily because of the work of the faculty and staff. It is they who teach the students, support their academic growth and

conduct the research that builds the University's reputation... CUNY's offer is considerably below the level of inflation and out of line with the recent settlement reached with the SUNY faculty union for 15% in increases over four years. Such an offer not only insults people who have given their professional lives to CUNY, it risks undermining the City University itself.

"Failure to provide adequate salaries"

During the past few years, the Legislature has invested significant political support in CUNY, pressing for increased resources on the grounds that the University was undergoing a renaissance. While I am gratified to see the expansion of CUNY and enhancement of many of its programs, I am alarmed that a failure to provide adequate salaries, health benefits and working conditions will jeopardize recent gains.

How many of the 600 full-time faculty hired in the last two

years will begin to look for positions elsewhere if CUNY salaries do not even keep pace with inflation?

I call on you to do everything you can to reach a fair settlement with the Professional Staff Congress. By supporting competitive salaries, decent benefits and good working conditions for CUNY's faculty and staff, you continue the forward motion of the University.

Signed by:

Assemblyman Jeffrion Aubry
Assemblyman Michael Benjamin
Assemblyman James Brennan
Assemblyman Ronald Canestrari
Assemblywoman Ann M. Carrozza
Assemblywoman Barbara Clark
Assemblywoman Adele Cohen
Assemblyman William Colton
Senator Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz
Senator Thomas Duane
Assemblyman Adriano Espaillat
Councilman Eric Gioia
Assemblywoman Deborah Glick
Assemblyman Richard Gottfried

Assemblyman Pete Grannis
Councilman Robert Jackson
Assemblywoman Rhoda Jacobs
Councilwoman Melinda Katz
Senator Jeffrey Klein
Councilman Oliver Koppell
Senator Liz Krueger
Assemblyman Ivan Lafayette
Councilwoman Margarita Lopez
Assemblywoman Nettie Mayersohn
Assemblyman Brian McLaughlin
Assemblyman Joel Miller
Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan
Assemblyman Clarence Norman
Assemblyman Daniel O'Donnell
Senator Kevin Parker
Senator David Paterson
Assemblyman José Peralta
Assemblywoman Audrey Pheffer
Senator Mary Lou Rath
Councilman Phil Reed
Assemblyman José Rivera
Assemblyman Peter Rivera
Senator Diane Savino
Senator Eric Schneiderman
Councilman Larry Seabrook
Senator José Serrano
Senator Toby Stavisky
Councilman Kendall Stewart
Assemblyman Scott Stringer

CONTRACT FIGHT

Why we need a Union Defense Fund

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

On the night of March 31, the PSC took a major step in our escalating fight for a contract. Union delegates voted overwhelmingly to create a Union Defense Fund. Not since the PSC's long campaign for a first contract, in 1973, has the union felt the need to take such serious action.

Why a Defense Fund – and why now? The answer begins with the developments at the bargaining table in the middle of March.

After months of very little movement, CUNY management responded to the pressure you have brought through marches, pickets, phone calls and faxes. Management did what they had vowed they would never do – they gave us a higher offer even though we had refused to lower our own proposal.

Five days later, the union made a comprehensive counterproposal. The difference between the two proposals defines our fight.

Although management's March 17 proposal represents significant movement from their disastrous 1.5% offer, it still amounts to a demand for concessions on wages, benefits and working conditions. However much the Chancellor may try to disguise the fact, his proposal suggests we take cuts in benefits, lose ground on salaries, work more hours, and make concessions such as the removal of department chairs from the union. I cannot imagine any reason to accept such an offer.

NO SALARY CUT

Consider management's latest proposal element by element. On salaries it offers a total increase of 6.25%, compounded, over four years, with an additional 1% increase to be funded by our own increased workload. I'll come back to the increased workload, but the obvious fact on the salaries is that they don't even keep up with the cost of living. An "increase" of 6.25% means that the real-dollar value of our salaries would *fall*. Despite Chancellor Goldstein's claim in his e-mail message of March 21 that "our first priority in these negotiations is to apply as much as possible of the economic package to across-the-board salary increases," what he has actually proposed is a salary cut.

It's the same story on benefits. Although the Chancellor claims that his proposal responds "to the PSC's concerns regarding the Welfare Fund," before the end of this contract it would leave us facing the same dilemma we face now. The \$200 increase offered by management comes nowhere near the galloping cost of prescription drugs, and thus provides no real solution to the Welfare Fund crisis. Without larger annual increases, that reserve would be spent down in a few years.



PSC President Bowen (right) addresses members and students at a March 26 rally at Brooklyn College.

The third concessionary element of the University's proposal is on working conditions. Management's offer includes a demand that we finance 1% of our below-inflation "raises" by adding seven days to the full-time faculty work-year, returning to campus on August 22 rather than August 30, the current contractual date. In addition, it demands that department chairs be removed from the union, along with several other PSC members who currently work in the Chancellor's Office or in management offices on the campuses. The agenda is clear: increase management control, reduce the power of the faculty, weaken the union.

A final problem with the Chancellor's proposal is its failure of imagination. What's missing is any concept that our lives at CUNY could be improved: there is nothing in the proposal on paid parental leave, nothing on improved sabbatical pay, nothing on sick days for adjuncts, nothing on improved due process, nothing on equity in annual leave for Library faculty, nothing on health and safety protections. Management's proposal also fails spectacularly to address the single biggest structural inequity in our workplace: the pay gap for CUNY's 9,500 part-time faculty, who still teach half of all courses.

The union's counterproposal, on the other hand, calls for a total economic package worth more than 14%, in comparison to management's 6.25% (plus a one-time amount of \$800 and a \$200 per capita increase in Welfare Fund payments). Our proposal would maintain progress on salaries, stabilize the Welfare Fund, and offer creative solutions to equity issues and problems in our working conditions. On adjuncts, it offers a structural

remedy for the problem of pay inequity by adding to, rather than subtracting from, the total economic package. There is a similar creativity in other union proposals: we seek recurring increases to the Welfare Fund, starting with the first year of the contract, not just a half-measure that does not solve the structural deficit. We identify a way of providing support for childcare expenses with a proposal modeled on a benefit available at SUNY. We insist that there are funds for improved sabbatical pay and progress on paid parental leave. And we call for a range of non-economic improvements that would make a real difference in our lives without adding a single dollar to the cost of the contract – adherence to fire safety requirements, improved due process, stronger language on non-discrimination. All of these have been rejected by management.

UNACCEPTABLE

Whereas the Chancellor's proposal limits salary increases to unacceptable levels, the union calls for increases worth, on average, 10.87%, with an additional \$500 added to base salary for some members in recognition of longevity. Our salary proposal, modeled on the settlement reached with SUNY faculty earlier this year, would raise the top salary to more than \$103,000. It would also combine percentage increases and dollar amounts to base salary, a mixture that benefits both the higher and the lower ends of the salary scale. While far from a princely increase, the union proposal offers a way to support both salaries and benefits, refusing to sacrifice one for the other, and provides for needed improvements in our lives at CUNY.

A major tool and the logical next step

Perhaps the best way of understanding the difference between our proposal and management's is that the union presents an alternative to the concessionary framework. Chancellor Goldstein, despite his promise last May that he did not intend to offer "an austerity contract" to the PSC, has done just that. Worse, he has tried to pass it off as the best we can hope for. Meanwhile, Mayor Bloomberg continues his attempt to brainwash the city into believing that the only possibility for public-employee unions is concessions, and so far, he has kept the unions from breaking through that framework. By the time you read this, the police union may have received its arbitration decision about a contract settlement, but whatever is settled there, the PSC will still face a fight.

It's because of the magnitude of that fight that we need a Union Defense Fund. The ceiling we must break through is political and ideological as well as economic. It's an artifact of a 30-year history of "pattern bargaining" in New York City. To win a non-concessionary contract in this political environment is a tall order for any union, but it can be done. One thing that may make it more possible is that this austerity agenda is politically manufactured – by everything from Bloomberg's corporate ideology to a regressive tax policy to the cost of the war. There is no shortfall in the City budget – in fact, this year there is a surplus of \$2.5 billion.

SERIOUS FIGHT

The Union Defense Fund is a major tool in our struggle. By turning to one of the labor movement's oldest and strongest practices, we signal that we are preparing for a serious fight. Defense funds typically provide resources for unions forced out on strike, but we have expanded the Fund's purpose to include several aspects of a public, militant campaign. The PSC has no plan to strike, and we will continue to use every tactic we can short of a job action to win the contract we need. But we would be throwing away labor's greatest power if we did not become the kind of union that is *prepared* to take job action, even though we hope never to be forced to do so.

The Defense Fund is the logical next step. I ask you to make a contribution. By contributing you empower the union to fight for your interests, you signal your support for the union's proposal, and you subtly change your relation to the place where you work.

Clarion APRIL 2005

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York, collective bargaining representative of the CUNY instructional staff. Vol. 34, No. 4. PSC/CUNY is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 2334), AFL-CIO, the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State United Teachers. Published by PSC/CUNY, 25 West 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Web site: www.psc-cuny.org. E-mail: phogness@psccmail.org. All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

PSC OFFICERS: Barbara Bowen, President; Steven London, First Vice President; Cecelia McCall, Secretary; John Hyland, Treasurer; Stanley Aronowitz, Jonathan Buchsbaum, Susan O'Malley, John Pittman, Sheldon Weinbaum, University-wide Officers; Michael Fabricant, Vice President, Senior Colleges; Robert Cermele, Janice Cline, Nancy Romer, Senior College Officers; Anne Friedman, Vice President, Community Colleges; Samuel E. Farrell, Andrew McInerney, Shirley Rausher, Community College Officers; Iris DeLutro, Vice President, Cross Campus Units; Arthurine DeSola, Steven Trimboli, Vera Weekes, Cross Campus Officers; Marcia Newfield, Vice President, Part-Time Personnel; Susan DiRaimo, Denise Ingram, Diane Menna, Part-Time Personnel Officers; Irwin H. Polishook, President Emeritus; Israel Kugler, Deputy President Emeritus; Peter I. Hoberman, Vice President Emeritus, Cross Campus Units.

STAFF: Deborah Bell, Executive Director; Mary Ann Carlese, Associate Executive Director; Faye H. Alladin, Coordinator, Financial Services; Debra L. Bergen, Director, Contract Administration & University-wide Grievance Counselor; Barbara Gabriel, Coordinator, Office Services and Human Resources; Diana Rosato, Coordinator, Membership Department; Clarissa Gilbert Weiss, Director, Pension and Welfare Benefits.

Editor: Peter Hogness / Assistant Editor: Dania Rajendra / Designer: Margarita Aguilar
© 2005 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

PSC people: Sally Hoskins

Frogs and science a cappella

Sally Hoskins is a professor of biology at City College. She earned a BS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1975 and a PhD in biology from the University of Chicago in 1982. Hoskins came to New York to do post-doctoral work in neurobiology and molecular biology at Columbia, and started at CCNY in 1988.

What do you do?

I'm a developmental biologist-slash-bioeducator.

What got you started in biology?

People say, "Oh, biologists, you guys dissect frogs." And it's funny, because I do work on frogs. In junior high, I was very taken with dissection, with what you saw inside. I liked the tools and working under the microscope. That's a total dork answer [laughs].

You work on frogs?

I've had a long-term research project on the metamorphosis of the nervous system. I study hormone-regulated neural development in tadpoles and frogs.

Tadpoles are different from frogs. They see differently, their skin is different, they move differently, they eat a different diet, they behave differently. Underlying all that are changes in the brain and the whole nervous system, during metamorphosis.

The biggest difference is that tadpoles have eyes on the sides of their heads and frogs have binocular vision, like people. The eyes grow during metamorphosis and new cells are added to the system. How do they wire up? How does the brain adjust to accommodate the new way the eyes work? That's what I study.

What's your most recent research interest?

Lately I've been really interested in research in education. I did a sabbatical last year and designed a method to teach undergraduates to read the research literature and to think creatively about science.

You don't really have to have



Biology Professor Sally Hoskins shows her students new ways to look at science – and scientists.

had any training in education to teach in college. Ross Nehm, my collaborator at CCNY, has opened my eyes to the whole world of pedagogy as an interesting thing. How do people learn, and how do you know if you taught them anything? Now, of course, I have the zeal of the newly converted.

Tell me about your new course.

The course is not just to teach them to read the literature – which is a complicated, technical kind of writing – but also to humanize science for them.

I gave the students journal articles without the abstracts or the conclusions, and had them read the methods and analyze the data in depth. The students had not had much experience really looking closely and critically at experimental data, and the fact that there might be different interpretations

of the results, including their own, was kind of shocking and empowering to them.

It's an NSF-supported project, and includes assessment of reading gains and "attitudes toward science/scientists." Before, when they thought "scientist," most of the students thought, "white coat, pocket protectors, uncreative."

By the end of the semester, they got excited about biologists. They thought, "not just faceless robots...they are free thinkers, kind of like hippies." It was fun to see the students realize, "Oh, wow, these are people like me."

What do you like best about teaching at CCNY?

I was drawn to CUNY because I went to a state university and got a very good education. I guess I had my fill of the elite after six years of Columbia. I like it when my stu-

dents really get it, when they catch fire a little.

What's hardest?

One disappointment at CCNY is that we don't have good support for graduate students. When I interviewed here, I stood in the hallway and they told me – in 1988 –

that they were building a grad student dorm. And it was a complete lie. I believed them. I was naive.

And your life outside of work?

Well, I like having a garden. I split my time between the Upper West Side and a small house with a big yard in Putnam County. I like working with my hands – sewing, making jewelry, knitting. I just like making stuff.

On the train, I often study music, because I conduct a women's a cappella chorus, called SHE. I like both singing and conducting. Once in a while, we commission a piece. I just commissioned music for a text I found in the elevator. It's an announcement for a high-energy physics seminar we had at the college. I know nothing about high-energy physics or, really, any other kind of physics. But I love the seminar notices, like this one called "complex networks are self-similar." I'm not mocking. It's like, wow, there are people in my building who speak this language. It seems musical to me.

What is the last thing you did with the union?

It's a little unusual to be unionized faculty, and it's good for us. I've been trying for years – unsuccessfully – to get health and safety issues in our building dealt with. When the union gets involved and files a grievance, at least a little more light shines on the issue.

This morning I went to a Step One grievance hearing. Carla Capetti and I did the training for the grievance counselor job, which we're sharing. If I can do the job effectively, I'm glad to contribute.



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Contribute to the Union Defense Fund!

What will it take to get CUNY management to agree to a fair contract? When PSC members have pushed, management has moved – but not enough to reach an agreement. It's time for us to push harder.

A key way to do that is to contribute to the Union Defense Fund. "Signing up for the Defense Fund is more than giving money, it's a show of support," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "No matter what size, your contribution will signify your support for a fair contract and help to build the power of the union."

A letter asking members to contribute is being sent out in the mail. You can make a one-time donation of any amount, or, better yet, fill out the card to have a fixed amount deducted from each paycheck. Either way, you'll be helping to make sure we have the financial strength to fight for the contract that we need.

Defense Funds are a common mechanism for building union power. The PSC established such a fund in 1973, as part of its first contract campaign, and the

union's Delegate Assembly voted on March 31 to create a new Defense Fund for the current state of emergency in contract negotiations.

The original PSC Defense Fund was designed to pay for extraordinary expenses if the union were forced to carry out a strike or job action. The Fund today could play a similar role, or it could be used to pay for extra expenses such as an intensive advertising campaign.

The money will be kept in a dedicated account at the PSC/CUNY Credit Union, separate from all other union funds. After this contract is settled, the Defense Fund will be maintained for future efforts, and regular contributions will continue to be encouraged.

Do you want to help win a fair contract – one that protects our Welfare Fund, provides real raises, and makes CUNY a better place to work? You can make a difference in less than 15 minutes: just fill out your red card at a chapter meeting or when it comes in the mail, and make your contribution to the Union Defense Fund.

Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

25 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

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

Free thinkers, not robots