

# Clarion

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OCTOBER 2006



**NEW FACULTY**

**A guide to the tenure clock change**

Five years versus seven

**PAGE 8**



Gary Schraichet

## LISTENING TO THE PSC

PSC Executive Council members have spent much of the Fall on a "listening campaign," visiting campuses to talk with chapter leadership and rank-and-file members, and meeting with union committees. These conversations

will inform decisions by the union's Delegate Assembly on the PSC's strategic priorities for the next three years. In photo above, PSC Secretary Arthurine DeSola (right) meets members at Baruch. **PAGES 6-7, 12**

### **PAYDAY**

#### **Raises for top CUNY execs**

The Board of Trustees gave large raises to Chancellor Goldstein, CUNY vice chancellors and college presidents – without public discussion. **PAGE 5**

### **HEALTH & SAFETY**

#### **Fiterman plan: will it be safe?**

Soon the contaminated hulk of BMCC's Fiterman Hall will be taken down. Lower Manhattan residents and workers will be watching closely. **PAGE 3**

### **CUNY LOVE STORY**

#### **Elder couple, new activists**

PSC retirees Gus Archilla and Elmer Lokkins have been partners for 61 years. Married in Canada three years ago, they say it's time for equality in NY. **PAGE 4**



### **PENSIONS**

#### **NY Times gets the story wrong**

A series of articles on City pensions made some TRS-members wonder if their pensions are secure. But was *The New York Times* report fair and balanced? **PAGE 9**

# Key NY role in fight for Congress

By DABNEY LYLES

Many people think of New York as a state that sends Democrats to Washington. But New York has nine Republican members of Congress – and it will play a pivotal role in the outcome of this year's midterm elections. The Republicans currently control the House by a 15-seat margin.

With polls showing broad disapproval of both President Bush and Congress, many Republican-held districts are now competitive. This includes five to seven districts in New York State, three of which include many members of the PSC.

Steve Harrison is challenging incumbent Vito Fossella in the 13th Congressional District, which spans Staten Island and parts of Brooklyn. Harrison's daughter attended the College of Staten Island, and he supports raising Pell grants to keep up with rising tuition costs.

That is a measure that Fossella voted against. Harrison has been vocal about increasing the federal minimum wage, while Fossella helped defeat a move to raise it from \$5.15 to \$6.15 an hour. In fact, in key votes in the current Congress, the American Federation of Teachers found that Fossella voted wrong on labor and education 100% of the time.

A Bush loyalist, Fossella has backed the war in Iraq without question, and states that American

troops must stay indefinitely. But with the war unpopular in his district, Fossella is trying to avoid the topic. A search on his campaign website for the word "Iraq" gets the answer, "No documents matched your query." Harrison supports a phased withdrawal of US forces. "There are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Iraq was not responsible for 9/11 – so there is no basis to continue," he says. "We should get out of Iraq."

## SUBURBS

Democrat David L. Mejias is running against incumbent Republican Peter King in the 3rd District on Long Island. Mejias has built his campaign around such issues as environmentalism, protecting social security from privatization, and raising the minimum wage. He has criticized King's vote to cut \$12.7 billion from federal student loan programs.

With little to offer on these issues, King has talked mainly about terrorism. This August, King advocated racial profiling of airline passengers – a violation of civil rights that experts say is also ineffective. King made headlines when he announced that he thanks God every night that George Bush is president. "I say Peter King should wake up," responded Mejias.

Democrat John Hall is opposing incumbent Republican Sue Kelly in



John Hall, former president of the Saugerties school board, is also a musician and an environmental activist.

the 19th District. The district includes Putnam County, and parts of Orange, Dutchess, Westchester and Rockland Counties. Hall has criticized Kelly's support for Bush's "No Child Left Behind" Act, arguing that insufficient funding has in fact left many children behind. Hall also says that with the Act's intense focus on standardized testing, teachers sometimes neglect critical thinking and problem-solving skills in order to "teach to the test."

Former head of the Saugerties school board, Hall is also a musician and an environmental activist. He is strongly opposed to the war in Iraq; of all the local Democratic challengers he has probably put the most emphasis on this issue.

## FARTHER AFIELD

Farther upstate, labor is backing Kirsten Gillibrand in her race against Rep. John Sweeney. In close Senate races, the PSC urges a vote

for Bob Menendez in NJ, and Ned Lamont in CT, said First Vice President Steve London.

To get involved with a campaign or for more information, contact Eileen Moran, co-chair of the PSC Legislation Committee, at eyedon@earthlink.net. On October 21 and 28, the NYC Central Labor Council is organizing buses from Manhattan for those who would like to spend the day volunteering with Hall's campaign; contact Moran for details.

# How the union endorses candidates

By PETER HOGNESS

The November 7 midterm elections may see a dramatic change in the Washington political landscape. Voters are increasingly unhappy with a Congress controlled by the hard right, and an unusual number of Republican incumbents may be turned out of office.

New York State United Teachers has traditionally endorsed many Republican incumbents – but at NYSUT's endorsement meeting in August, PSC delegates supported the move to a "Take Back the House" strategy. "PSC delegates were part of strong sentiment within NYSUT to change the balance of power in Washington," said PSC First Vice President Steve London.

This fall, the PSC is focusing on the opportunity for change in several New York Congressional races (see above). But in most elections,

## PSC part of NYSUT process

the union has focused its electoral energy on campaigns for local office. "Local races may receive little coverage in the media, but in a close election a get-out-the-vote effort by mail and phone may determine the outcome," said Eileen Moran, co-chair of the PSC Legislative Committee. "It's here that we can have the most impact."

## STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

It's a practical emphasis that has shown results. Since 2000, PSC endorsements and campaigning have built a strong relationship with key City Council members. The Council has consistently rejected Mayor Bloomberg's proposed cuts to CUNY's budget.

The PSC endorsement process for City Council races begins in the union's Legislative Committee. Candidates are screened through questionnaires and interviews. Since the petition deadline for primary elections is in mid-July, much of this screening process occurs between June 1 and the end of August.

If the committee can make a recommendation in a given race early enough, a proposed endorsement is considered by the PSC Executive Council (EC) in June and voted on by the Delegate Assembly (DA) at the end of the month. Later recommendations may be voted on by the EC.

"Candidate screening is an extremely labor-intensive process," said Moran. The busiest time in this process is in the summer, which does not mesh easily with CUNY's calendar. "We prioritize races for open seats," noted Moran, "since we have the most influence when candidates first seek election."

In state and federal elections, the PSC does not act alone. Endorsement decisions in all races for Congress, statewide office, State Senate and Assembly are made through NY State United Teachers – and the PSC and all other locals make recommendations to NYSUT's Statewide Endorsement Conference concerning these races. All locals are

then represented by NYSUT's official endorsement decisions, which are made by vote of the NYSUT Board of Directors.

"The PSC does its own interviews of federal or state candidates mainly where there's a unique opportunity to elect someone remarkable or oust someone terrible," said Moran. This June, the DA voted on

## In local races, endorsements are up to local unions.

two recommendations from the Legislative Committee: that the PSC work for a NYSUT primary endorsement of Charles Barron for Congress and Bill Perkins for State Senate. Both have been strong allies of the PSC in their terms on the City Council; NYSUT backed Perkins but not Barron, who was defeated by incumbent Ed Towns.

## NYSUT & PAC

Representing the PSC at this year's NYSUT Endorsement Conference were Moran and Vera Weekes, co-chairs of the PSC Legislative Committee; PSC Secretary Arthurine DeSola; and London. Along with President Barbara Bowen, London and Moran are local coordinators for NYSUT's

Political Action Committee (PAC). At the conference, PAC coordinators and local presidents discuss recommended endorsements. The result is a set of PAC endorsement recommendations forwarded to the NYSUT Board of Directors for final determination.

## HIGHER ED

In general, NYSUT's endorsement policy has been to reward incumbents who have voted in favor of selected NYSUT positions. In races where there is no incumbent, its stated policy is to remain neutral "unless there is a compelling reason to make an endorsement." If NYSUT makes no endorsement in a statewide race, a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors may allow locals to make separate endorsements.

Over time, the PSC has worked successfully for higher education issues to get stronger consideration in NYSUT endorsement decisions. "Our advocacy led NYSUT to impose sanctions on those who failed public education in several budget overrides," noted Moran. "NYSUT helps us affect politics on a statewide basis, and we have a growing voice within it."

## Write to Clarion

Letters should be no more than 150-200 words, and are subject to editing. Write to phogness@pscmail.org.



# City & labor coalition to start talks

By PETER HOGNESS  
& DANIA RAJENDRA

## Union alliance a new factor

The municipal unions that came together in June to form a bargaining coalition are presenting their demands to the City, President Barbara Bowen told PSC delegates on September 28. The Delegate Assembly (DA) approved a resolution affirming the PSC's participation in the coalition, which includes the UFT, sanitation workers and more than a dozen other unions.

"The PSC will still bargain directly with CUNY," Bowen told *Clarion*. "We will still present demands to CUNY on behalf of the PSC, after they are approved by the DA." While the coalition does not change that, she said, taking part in the coalition will still be very important for the PSC. "We are in the coalition because we are part of the City workforce, and what the City bar-

gains with other unions has a direct effect on us," Bowen said.

For decades, New York City and State have insisted on keeping the economic cost of the PSC contract in

### Past City settlements affected PSC members.

line with their settlements with other unions, an approach known as "pattern bargaining." CUNY needs approval from the City to sign a contract – and while State approval is also required, the City's stance has often had the biggest impact on CUNY management.

"We know that the positions of the City and State are very important for our final contract," Steve London, the PSC's first vice president, told delegates. "So we are taking a strategic position with the City, to push that settlement as far as we can." London noted that the labor coalition, which the PSC

helped form, is the broadest such effort seen in several decades.

"Our bargaining will be enhanced by the coalition because we will have greater strength with collective muscle," said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant.

### ECONOMIC PACKAGE

The central item for coalition bargaining is the size of the overall economic settlement. As an active participant in the coalition, Bowen reported, "the PSC has emphasized rank-and-file mobilization" to expand the boundaries of a possible settlement. As a member of its negotiating committee, Bowen has also helped shape the coalition's demands. The coalition was established on the basis of a six-month commitment, with member unions slated to assess the effort in January.

While the coalition's first bargain-

ing session with the City is not scheduled until late October, its formation is already having an effect. After the coalition was announced, the City dropped its demands for concessions in talks with the largest single municipal union, DC37, which then reached a much better settlement than in its last round of bargaining. *The New York Times* and other observers concluded that DC37 had benefited from the coalition's new muscle, even though it is not a member. "I think the formation of the coalition was the impetus for the mayor to settle with DC37," Lynn Taylor, a member of DC37's bargaining committee, told *Clarion* in August.

### DIVIDED WE FALL

The last DC37 contract included only a 4.17% pay hike over three years, plus 2% in exchange for "productivity" changes – such as slashing the wages of new employees. Similar trade-offs were imposed on other City unions, as Mayor Bloomberg in-

sisted they give up money (such as deep cuts in starting pay for police) or time (such as longer hours for UFT members) to get a pay increase.

The City's strategy was based in part on its ability to deal with each union separately. This time, faced with a joint effort by more than half the municipal workforce, Bloomberg abandoned his insistence on concessions and moved to make a deal with DC37 as soon as possible. By signing a contract with modest increases (about 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>% annually over 32 months) at a time of a record City budget surplus, the mayor is seeking to limit how much other unions can gain.

The coalition is not negotiating over basic health insurance, which will continue to be bargained through the Municipal Labor Committee. The MLC encompasses nearly all municipal unions, including some large ones – such as DC37 and the PBA – that are not in the new wage-bargaining coalition.

# Concern over Fiterman

By JOAN GREENBAUM  
PSC Health & Safety Committee  
and DANIA RAJENDRA

## Toxins need careful cleanup

At last, Fiterman Hall is to be taken down. CUNY is finalizing plans to decontaminate and then deconstruct the shrouded remains of BMCC's former building, located directly north of the World Trade Center site. A new building replacing Fiterman is slated to open in 2009 – good news for overcrowded BMCC students, faculty and staff. But people in Lower Manhattan are worried about how air quality and safety will be protected while the work unfolds.

Dismantling Fiterman is a huge undertaking; there are few precedents for taking down a structure with as much toxic contamination. The building was severely damaged on September 11, and tests conducted in early 2002 indicated high levels of dioxin, a cancer-causing toxin produced by intense burning of plastics. The tests also showed a hazardous brew of other contaminants, including mercury, PCBs and asbestos.

### THE PLAN

To take down Fiterman and put up a new building, CUNY is working with DASNY, the Dormitory Authority of New York, which handles all CUNY construction. The plan, they say, is to decontaminate the building, then dismantle it and cart away the pieces. The two agencies are coordinating with the EPA, which must approve all decontamination plans.

A similar project underway at the Deutsche Bank building, at 130

Liberty Street, has been riddled with problems. Deutsche Bank was forced to halt work after residents saw unsafe work practices and complained, said Dave Newman of the NY Committee on Occupational Safety & Health (NYCOSH). Residents plan to keep a close eye on Fiterman as well.

### DEVELOPERS UPSET

Fiterman has been increasingly criticized as both a safety hazard and an eyesore. Some of the loudest complaints have come from real estate developers, who say that Fiterman's damaged hulk is slowing rentals in the rebuilt office space around the World Trade Center site. "Fiterman Hall has been the bane of my existence," developer Larry Silverstein told the *Downtown Express*.

So why is work on Fiterman only now about to start? The biggest cause of delay was a dispute with the insurance company, which claimed that the building could still be repaired. The PSC and CUNY insisted a new building was needed; an insurance settlement was not reached until 2004. New York State did not give full backing to building a replacement until last year.

Downtown developers are eager for the building to come down quickly. Residents and workers agree but insist it must come down safely as well. The WTC Community and Labor Coalition, which includes both the PSC and NYCOSH, has pressed

City, State and Federal agencies for a safe and transparent process. "The health of the community, which includes our BMCC members and their students, must be protected," said PSC Health and Safety Co-Chair Dave Kotelchuck.

At a public hearing on September 18, DASNY Project Manager Rich Dalessio told Community Board 1 that the first stage will be scaffolding the whole structure, "as a way to show some action." The scaffolding will take two to three months, Dalessio said.

At that meeting, DASNY reported that as part of the scaffolding process, they will take down the netting that shrouds the gaping holes on Fiterman's south side. The netting was put up to contain the toxic dust and debris inside – but DASNY says the netting itself is now contaminated.

### Workers, students & residents all affected.

### SAFETY

"The netting will be treated as asbestos-containing material, wrapped up and taken away," DASNY spokesperson Claudia Hutton told *Clarion*. Hutton said that answers to specific questions – such as how the debris will be contained while the netting is removed, or whether the air will be tested while this work is carried out – will be in the plan that DASNY submits to EPA at the beginning of October.

Once dismantled, the building chunks are likely to be trucked up West and Barclay streets, right past



CUNY's Eduardo del Valle testifies at the September 18 hearing.

Stuyvesant High School and BMCC. "The Deutsche Bank demolition process has been made much safer by the constant vigilance of local residents and workers," said Newman, who spoke at a BMCC chapter meeting on September 20. The Health and Safety Committee recommends members who suspect violations report them to the office of Eduardo del Valle, CUNY's interim Vice Chancellor for Facilities, Planning and Construction (212-794-5315), and alert PSC Health and Safety (212-354-1252).

CUNY will oversee DASNY's work, said del Valle. "CUNY is responsible. DASNY works for us. We are the client," he told *Clarion*. PSC health and safety activists have said that on some past construction projects, the lines of accountability have not been so clear, and Kotelchuck told *Clarion* that del Valle's statement was welcome.

On September 18, del Valle told Community Board 1 that CUNY would hold an open community meeting at BMCC in mid-October. But when *Clarion* went to press on October 11, CUNY said the date for this hearing had still not been set. For the latest information, see [www.CB1.org](http://www.CB1.org).

### SCAFFOLDING

Once the EPA grants approval for the scaffolding plans, DASNY can choose a scaffolding subcontractor and begin work. Meanwhile, DASNY and its contractors will formulate plans for cleaning up and taking apart the building, and submit them to the EPA. The decontamination and demolition phases are expected to take four to six months each. When the new building is completed in 2009, it will reportedly provide as much space for BMCC as did Fiterman.



# Together for 61 years – & now married

By DANIA RAJENDRA

By any measure, PSC members Gus Archilla, 90, and Elmer Lokkins, 87, have lived extraordinary lives.

The two met in 1945 and have been partners ever since. Elmer attended City College, and the two worked there and at the Graduate Center until they retired together in 1976. Their 30 years of retirement, which they call their “second career,” have taken them to all seven continents (yes, even Antarctica) – and, three years ago, to Canada to get married. It was about time: the *Daily News* reports that with 61 years together, Gus and Elmer “may be the city’s longest-standing gay couple.” Since they tied the knot, they’ve forged a third career of sorts, as activists in the fight for marriage equality.

## BEGINNINGS

Elmer grew up in an orphanage in Illinois. In 1941, at 21, he was drafted into the Army. Shortly after the war ended in 1945, he was standing in a knot of people listening to a speech at Columbus Circle, when Gus spotted him. Gus, who had lost his own parents a few years earlier, was dashing out of Carnegie Hall after his voice lesson.

“It was almost sundown and I was running home to dinner,” Gus remembers. “And I happened to see Elmer standing among the crowd. And I think I smiled and said hello or something.”

“Well, he was gorgeous,” says Elmer, smiling. “He always was.”

They began talking, and as it turned out, Elmer was in town trying to gain admission at Columbia University. He missed the deadline and wasn’t able to get in. But Gus had some friends at City College, where Elmer soon matriculated as a business student, hoping to transfer to Columbia at the first opportunity.

“Well, he never transferred,” Gus notes. “He liked City College so much he stayed there ... for the rest of his life!”

## FAMILY ACCEPTANCE

Elmer soon moved into an extra room in the Archilla apartment, and the two became family. Only two of Gus’ sisters still lived in the Washington Heights apartment, but the nine Archillas were a close-knit group. Gus came with his family from Puerto Rico at 15, and was in his early twenties when his parents died. “I had to accept the responsibility of leading the family,” he says. He and two brothers worked to support the family, and the siblings pulled together to make the best of it. “We were young, everybody was poor, it was nothing new, and we managed pretty well,” Gus remembers.

The two say their families accepted the other from the beginning. “And we were not only embraced as members of the family, each family, but all my relatives are crazy about Elmer and I think that I’m loved just

## Two PSC retirees’ life together



Elmer Lokkins (left) and Gus Archilla

as equally by his family,” Gus says. He credits that support with helping sustain their relationship. The two are uncles or great-uncles to some 89 nieces and nephews, all of whom receive birthday cards from the pair. It’s Elmer’s responsibility to keep the list and make sure the cards go out on time. “Now that I get e-mail, e-cards are so much easier,” he notes. That’s not the only list Elmer keeps: “Our Christmas list is 500,” Gus adds proudly, “because we have accumulated an extended family of friends through the years and we have them in every part of the world.”

Keeping lists comes easily to a former registrar. After graduating from City College, Elmer went to work at its School of Business; in 1953, he became CCNY’s assistant registrar. The two moved from Washington Heights to an apartment in Morning-side Gardens in 1957, where Elmer says he walked to work every morning and came home for lunch every afternoon. The apartment has been their home for the last 50 years.

Gus began working occasionally at the college, mostly in event planning. At first, it was one part-time job among many. But in 1966, when Elmer became registrar of the brand-new Graduate Center, Gus helped him set up his office systems. “At the Graduate Center, I discovered how much I enjoyed the atmosphere, the ambiance of academia,” Gus says. When GC President Mina Rees asked him to join the staff as an assistant registrar, he went full-time and remained at the GC for more than a decade. They retired together in 1976.

“But he only had 13 years and I had 30,” Elmer is quick to say. “So he doesn’t get the pension I get!”

This kind of easygoing banter is one of the things they say has kept them together for so long. And Gus says that even after six decades of living together, working together,

traveling together and loving one another, having a wedding did change things. “Somehow things appear differently,” he says. Being married is “a lot more serious than before.” When they first got together, Gus says, “getting married never crossed our minds.”

“Not only that,” adds Elmer, “but we knew that we couldn’t. We couldn’t even tell people that we were lovers.”

“It was difficult to even think about it,” says Gus. “The history of what has been done since is hopeful, sort of encouraging. Look at how many things we have won through the years – but how long did it take?”

“He’ll be 91 in December, and I was 87 in May,” says Elmer. All

New Yorkers will one day have equal rights in marriage, he says – “but we wonder if we’re still going to be here.”

Their wedding not only brought the two of them closer together, it brought them closer to the gay activist community – especially “the boys in Yonkers,” as they call their new “best couple friends,” Michael and Robert Sabatino-Voorheis.

The Sabatino-Voorheises were married in the same spot as Gus and Elmer, the previous month. In Canada, as the PSC retirees waited for their marriage license to be prepared, the clerk gave them a *New York Times* story to read about the wedding of Michael and Robert. Later, after the *Times* featured Gus and Elmer, the two couples got in touch. “We’ve been friends ever since,” Michael tells *Clarion*. Gus and Elmer credit these friends with supporting and encouraging their activism.

## ACTIVIST FRIENDS

Michael and Robert Sabatino-Voorheis are active in Marriage Equality New York, a seven-year-old organization fighting for same-sex couples’ right to marry. They encouraged Elmer and Gus to participate in their first-ever Gay Pride Parade. Since then, Gus and Elmer have been front and center at Marriage Equality NY’s annual demonstration for marriage equality, dubbed the “Wedding March,” across the Brooklyn Bridge. “They were our first Couple Of The Year,” says Michael.

Gus and Elmer have also been active members of the PSC Retirees Chapter. They’ve joined the chapter at contract demonstrations, including picketing CUNY Board Chair Benno Schmidt’s office last year.

The CUNY connection is important to two people who loved working at the University. Elmer remembers the hectic days of registration fondly – at least from a distance of 30 years! “Everybody could be a professor, everybody could be an instructor but nobody else could be the registrar,” he says proudly. “I did registration at City College for 10,000 students! Can you imagine, we had that many!”

## DISCRIMINATION AT CUNY

“We always serviced the students well,” adds Gus. “What was exciting for me was starting at the bottom rung and building something big. Now the Graduate Center is full-fledged, and a big institution.”

While they were working at CUNY, “we were not out,” Elmer recalls. He tells one story of confronting bias at CUNY, in the early 1970s, when the Grad Center was honoring President Mina Rees on her retirement. “When we were invited to the party,” Elmer recalls, “they said ‘and your spouse.’ I said, ‘This is my spouse.’ But the dean said, ‘No, you can’t come.’ But when it got back to the president, she said, ‘I love Gus – of course he’s coming!’” Elmer says that afterwards, he got calls from all over the University inviting him to lunch.

“So they could chit-chat about the scandal!” Gus says with a grin.

“Anyway,” Elmer finishes, “it was something that got all over the University. I didn’t realize there were so many people who were hidden away in the closet.” He pauses, no longer smiling. “It’s very unfair what they have done to us over many, many years. And maybe we’ll get some fairness now. I certainly hope so.”

# NY unions support equality

On June 26, 20 New York-based union leaders declared their support for marriage equality for lesbian and gay couples. PSC President Barbara Bowen joined UFT President Randi Weingarten and UNITE HERE President Bruce Raynor, among others, in speaking out.

“The union movement is at its most powerful when we fight to expand the civil and economic rights of all,” Bowen said. Getting married bestows 1,138 federal protections and benefits, she noted, and “no one should be denied these rights on the basis of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or affectional preference.”

Dennis Rivera, president of SEIU 1199, said, “While members of SEIU 1199 have a variety of views about marriage... it is a fundamental, uniting principle of our organization

that all people are entitled to equal rights.”

As part of its non-discrimination policy, CUNY recognizes same-sex marriages performed where they are legal, such as Massachusetts and Canada, but awareness of that policy has filtered unevenly through the system.

Last year, Queens College secretary and AFSCME DC 37 member Robert Pisano was the first CUNY worker to gain spousal benefits under the policy.

Filmmaker and Hunter College Chapter Chair Tami Gold says it’s a basic part of unionism to support equal rights for all. In her 1997 film *Out At Work: Lesbians and Gay Men on the Job*, Gold examined gay workers’ struggle for fair treatment in the workplace. “Gay and lesbian issues are, in fact, bread-and-butter issues,” Gold told *Clarion*.



The Chen-Hayes family at the Labor Day parade: Lehman Associate Professor Stuart (left), Kalani and Lance.



# CUNY management gets raises

By DANIA RAJENDRA

On September 25, the CUNY Board of Trustees voted to raise the salaries of college presidents, vice chancellors and Chancellor Matthew Goldstein.

The trustees gave Goldstein a \$45,000 increase, boosting his pay from \$350,000 to \$395,000 per year. The chancellor and other top CUNY executives last received a raise in October 2003, when the chancellor got a pay hike of \$100,000. SUNY's chancellor is currently paid \$340,000 per year.

City College President Gregory Williams remains the highest-paid CUNY college president, at \$250,000 per year. Hunter College President Jennifer Raab received the largest increase among college presidents, at \$29,000, with Williams a close second at \$28,297.

## SURPRISES

The high raises for Williams and Raab surprised many; both are known for their difficult relationships with their colleges' faculty and staff. In last year's University Faculty Senate survey, 73% of full-time faculty respondents at CUNY were dissatisfied with the level of respect shown faculty by the administration. At Hunter, in an AAUP/PSC survey on academic freedom, 62% of full-time faculty respondents said that public dissent on college policy could lead to reprisals. Among CUNY's Vice Chancellors,

## 'Performance-based' rewards

Allan Dobrin got an increase almost as large as Goldstein's, at \$44,850. New salaries were also announced for the deans of CUNY's journalism and law schools, and for three top managers in Goldstein's office.

The changes were adopted with no advance notice. The trustees considered the raises for 33 top executives in a 43-minute executive session, or about one minute and 18 seconds per raise. "Unlike our salary increases, which are a matter

of prolonged debate – and need approval from the City and State," noted PSC President Barbara Bowen, "the Board of Trustees decides management's salaries privately, without public discussion."

## PERFORMANCE

The Board has said that raises for top CUNY managers are "performance-based" – that is, based on a careful assessment of specific criteria. These include both broad themes (e.g.,

"respects and encourages a diversity of views on campus") and more specific goals (e.g., "each college will meet agreed upon revenue targets for adult and continuing education").

The chancellor's raises are also said to be "performance-based" – and in the period covered by the current PSC contract, Goldstein has now seen his pay increase by 58%.

"Anything CUNY management has accomplished is based on the efforts of PSC members and other CUNY workers," said Shelly Mendlinger, PSC chapter chair for College Lab Technicians. "It's typical of corporate management to pocket the benefits of our hard work – while we constantly have to figure out new ways to 'do more with less.'"

## New rates for College Presidents are:

NAME	COLLEGE	NEW SALARY	RAISE
Gregory Williams	City College	\$250,073	\$28,297
Kathleen Waldron*	Baruch	\$238,550	\$16,774
Christoph Kimmich	Brooklyn	\$224,000	\$25,608
William Kelly	Graduate Center	\$218,577	\$18,577
Jennifer Raab	Hunter	\$218,000	\$29,000
James Muyskens	Queens	\$217,036	\$19,436
Ricardo Fernández	Lehman	\$209,000	\$24,110
Jeremy Travis*	John Jay	\$207,718	\$11,871
Russell Hotzler	City Tech	\$205,492	\$20,128
Marlene Springer	Staten Island	\$200,124	\$17,011
Edison Jackson	Medgar Evers	\$199,000	\$19,913
Marcia Keizs*	York	\$199,000	\$17,000
Regina Peruggi*	Kingsborough CC	\$197,000	\$18,255
Eduardo Martí	Queensborough CC	\$195,591	\$19,011
Antonio Pérez	BMCC	\$195,496	\$16,736
Carolyn Williams	Bronx CC	\$195,094	\$22,395
Gail Mellow	LaGuardia CC	\$190,000	\$22,816
Dolores Fernandez	Hostos CC	\$181,520	\$15,038

\* Appointed after October 2003

## Pay rates at the Central Office include:

NAME	TITLE	NEW SALARY	RAISE
Matthew Goldstein	Chancellor	\$395,000	\$45,000
Allan Dobrin	Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer	\$243,335	\$44,850
Selma Botman*	Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost	\$243,335	\$18,335
Jay Hershenson	Senior Vice Chancellor for University Relations and Secretary of the Board of Trustees	\$220,000	\$26,981
Frederick Schaffer	General Counsel and Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs	\$220,000	\$25,260
Ernesto Malave	Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance	\$190,329	\$21,849
Brenda Malone	Vice Chancellor for Faculty and Staff Relations	\$188,897	\$23,537
Michael Zavelle	Vice Chancellor for Academic Administration and Planning	\$186,501	\$21,501
Garrie Moore*	Vice Chancellor for Student Development	\$180,000	\$10,000
Eduardo del Valle*	Interim Vice Chancellor for Facilities Planning, Construction, and Management	\$176,419	\$11,419

\* Appointed after October 2003

# Grad assistants end strike

By BENNETT BAUMER

Members of the Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC) at New York University ended their strike this fall without winning a union contract. GSOC leaders say this will be a semester for "rebuilding," as they organize around issues such as higher health insurance costs and paycheck problems.

GSOC had been the first union in the nation to win a contract for graduate employees at a private university. That agreement, in 2002, came only after GSOC took a strike vote. On the eve of the planned walkout, NYU agreed to major improvements in both pay and benefits.

## RETALIATION

But in 2004, a new Republican majority on the National Labor Relations Board reversed a previous NLRB decision, ruling that graduate assistants have no federally protected right to form a union. The Board held that labor as teaching and research assistants is not work, but simply part of grad students' education.

NYU then refused to negotiate a second contract with GSOC, and the union went on strike last November.

## Majority support reaffirmed

Normal university life was disrupted, and NYU offered hundreds of undergraduates the option of switching to pass/fail grades or even retaking courses for free.

The administration took an aggressive stance toward the strikers, threatening to ban them from employment in future semesters. Foreign grad assistants were especially vulnerable, as their student visas put strict limits on seeking work outside of NYU.

To blacklist workers because they have taken part in a labor action is illegal under the federal labor law – but now that grad assistants were no longer covered, NYU had a freer hand to carry out retaliation. As Spring semester wore on, only a minority remained on strike, and NYU appeared no closer to the bargaining table.

To recapture the initiative, the union circulated a petition in April reaffirming support for GSOC and for a union contract. The American Arbitration Association certified that a majority of graduate assistants had signed, taking the air out of NYU's in-

sistence that the union was isolated. "To reaffirm a majority, especially after a six-month strike, was a positive end to the semester," said Jenny Shaw, a GSOC member and graduate student in history.

GSOC also organized a mass rally and nonviolent sit-in on April 28, which resulted in 57 arrests. Among those taking part in the civil disobedience was Jim Perlestein, co-chair of the PSC Solidarity Committee, in one of several PSC actions in support of the strike. PSC members had been a regular presence at GSOC pickets and rallies, and the union had urged its members not to let NYU recruit them as scabs.

## REFLECTION

But while the April actions boosted GSOC's public profile, they were not enough to weather the steady anti-union assault by the NYU administration. GSOC members voted to suspend the strike over the summer, and in September brought it to an end.

Looking back, GSOC members sum up the walkout in different ways. "I think the strike was too long and we thought we had much more pow-

er than we did," said Fred Laliberte, a grad student in mathematics. Laliberte was the last striking grad student in his department when he returned to work at the end of the Fall 2005 semester. But he thinks grad assistants still need a union, and signed the petition in favor of GSOC.

Others said that grad assistants should have had more preparation for a strike action. "I learned about the strike a week before it happened, and I don't know if we realized how vicious NYU would be," said Holly Lewis, a striking teaching assistant in the Creative Writing program. Though she was barred from teaching this Fall, Lewis told *Clarion* she does not regret the decision to strike. "I have come to the conclusion that NYU just wants cheap labor," she said.

Some GSOC members felt that the union should have relied on stronger direct action. "Before the winter break, many of us thought we could've escalated," said Mitch Day, a graduate teaching assistant in neuroscience. When strike supporters occupied the Bobst Library lobby outside NYU President John Sexton's office, he said, they should have stayed and made demands.

"We had a mass number of grad students in the beginning," said Day, "but symbolic picket lines weren't effective, they were just a moral high ground." Instead, he argued, GSOC should have insisted

that people respect the picket lines and not cross them.

"We tried a variety of tactics" during the hard-fought strike, responded GSOC President Michael Palm. "We are looking at all of the decisions we made last year and seeing what worked."

GSOC vows to continue the fight until a second contract is achieved. NYU unilaterally increased health care copayments by 30% this year, and Palm says this action shows exactly why a union is needed. "With a union contract, NYU wouldn't be able to impose these cuts unilaterally," he noted. "They would have to negotiate."

## FLASHPOINT

As grad assistants have done at Yale and elsewhere, GSOC will seek ways to organize as a union even without a contract or official recognition. The first such flashpoint came in September, when grad assistants in the Chemistry Department failed to receive their first paycheck and were told that this money would be paid out gradually over the course of the year. Angry about being shortchanged, they marched on administration offices to demand the full amount by October at the latest.

"We have to rebuild, and when we are good and ready, we'll pull out the horses," Palm told *Clarion*. "We know we're not going to get a second contract without fighting for it."





Jason Davis (left) and Nelson Reynoso (right) of BCC's chapter executive committee with PSC President Barbara Bowen

**BARGAINING COMES** down to *us* versus *them*. We want the *us* on our side of the table to be as expansive as possible. When *us* includes our students, other unions, community groups, sympathetic politicians, religious supporters – that's when we can win. We are on the same "side" as millions of other New Yorkers, and we will be strongest when our work is based on that connection.

– Penny Lewis  
Instructor, Sociology, BMCC

**HOW DO** we create the power we need to be able to accomplish more than incremental change? Reports from the last contract negotiations indicated that CUNY management was adamant in its refusal to consider any improvements on the issues of greatest concern to adjuncts – namely, equity in pay and some degree of job security. It is my estimation that adjuncts will find unacceptable any subsequent contract that does not make significant progress on these issues. The union and its negotiators must thus develop a strategy for dealing with management's intransigence.

– Michael Seitz  
Adjunct lecturer, Communications Skills, John Jay



Elyse Mendel, HEO Assistant at the School of Public Affairs at Baruch College

## What members are saying

# Union leaders

This Fall PSC leadership has launched a "listening campaign" – and these pages feature some of what members have had to say.

On campuses across CUNY, members of the PSC Executive Council are meeting with local chapter leaders and visiting departments and offices to talk informally with members. PSC Secretary Arthurine DeSola and other union officers are meeting with members in HEO-series titles on every campus, and another series of meetings is being held with union committees.

"It's always a good thing for a union leadership to listen to members," said President Barbara Bowen – and particularly now, when the union is planning its priorities for the next three years (see below). She said the discussions so far have been "always useful and sometimes revelatory."



LaGuardia chapter officers Joan Greenbaum and George Walters

**THE UNION** has got to get its overall e-communications process better organized. My biggest concern, even though I'm a faculty member, is HEOs. We would do much better in the next contract round and have a very powerful tool if HEOs worked only to rule, but they have to feel that the union's there for them. That would make University management sit up and take notice.

– Bill Ferns  
Associate professor, Computer Information Systems, Baruch

## DA begins strategy talks

By DANIA RAJENDRA

This Fall, the PSC is engaged in a process of strategic planning that will define the union's main goals for the next three years. That process moved forward in September with a special meeting of the PSC Delegate Assembly.

The current "listening campaign" (see above) will inform the decisions of the Delegate Assembly (DA) and Executive Council (EC) as they weigh the union's strategic choices, President Barbara Bowen told delegates on September 21. "We are developing a plan together," Bowen said. "The idea is to make a conscious, collective choice about the direction we want to pursue."

**Delegates start to define the union's choices.**

In August the EC held a special two-day meeting to begin the process. At the September 21 Delegate Assembly, participants broke into small groups to address a common set of questions, including what the union's achievements have been, what its main goals should be, and how to measure progress toward those goals.

Mark Richard, a labor lawyer and professor of sociology at Miami-Dade Community College, is working with PSC leadership on the planning process. Richard is president of the Miami-Dade CC local of the American Federation of Teachers, and is well known in the labor movement for his work in strategic planning.

The purpose, Richard said, is to define goals that will focus the union's energy in the most effective way. "It's a much greater challenge to do this process in large groups and with transparency," Richard told the DA. "But your leadership told me I couldn't come in unless you did it that way – and you should be proud of that. It just means that it takes longer."

### CONVERSATION CONTINUES

The conversation continues at the next DA, when delegates will examine the relationship of the current political climate to the union's goals. Later in the year, the EC will propose a strategic plan to delegates, who will discuss it, consider amendments and vote on the final result.

**IT'S IMPORTANT** to connect our union with teachers and unions in other countries facing political, socio-economic and environmental dangers and to support public higher education against forces of privatization, corporatization and standardization.

– Electa Arena  
Professor emerita,  
Modern Languages/  
Women's Studies,  
CSI and Grad Center

**I THINK** the unity among members is the most pressing issue. Unity among adjuncts, full-timers and department chairs, HEOs – I think it's really very good, but we can improve. We need to work on job security and health benefits for adjuncts.

– Gail Graves  
Adjunct lecturer,  
Modern Languages,  
Baruch

**I HAD** been teaching at a university in Germany, where students treat their teachers like gods. When I got the job at Kingsborough, it was quite a shock. I thought the students were so rude, their writing was so bad. . . . But I ended up loving the job. The social mission of CUNY is extremely important. We give a home to students of all kinds, even if their preparation is not so good. At CUNY they can make up for those gaps, and that's very important.

– Rosalind Depas  
Professor emerita, English, Kingsborough CC



# s go out to listen



Chapter activists Linda Ianuzzo (left) and Karen Miller at LaGuardia

**WE'RE TRYING** to build a stewards' council here at LaGuardia. A stewards' council is a system in which each department has a representative, and that representative also organizes his or her department or area. We want to focus on getting the campus organized. Any help from the central office would go a long way.

– Karen Miller  
Assistant professor, Social Science, LaGuardia CC

**WIN OR** lose, it's worth a fight on the Taylor Law. It brings the debate on the constitutionality of the law into the forefront and would be a major way to coalesce the entire labor movement on this issue. It's an issue that anybody can relate to – public sector employees should have the same right to strike or take action on the job as private sector employees.

– Peter Ranis  
Professor emeritus, Political Science, York College

**WE NEED** improvements in the dental benefits! Whatever I get from the pay increase will go straight into paying out-of-pocket for dental. I just had to pay \$3,000 for my child's orthodontics.

– Walter De La Torre  
Lecturer, Computer Information Systems, LaGuardia CC

**COLLEGE LAB TECHNICIANS** are like second-class citizens. We're left holding the bag in the summer or on vacation days. We're working like dogs and there's nowhere to go. We have no real promotional paths, so there's no way to get credit for doing that much work. Couldn't there be a new CLT title – equal, but different from, the Chief CLT line – to reflect the new technical responsibilities CLTs have?

– Jerry Sitbon  
Senior College Lab Technician, Queensborough CC

**FACULTY'S EFFORTS** are spread too thinly over too many courses. Faculty should be assigned fewer courses so they can give their students and material the same attention that instructors in "elite" schools are able to offer. Our students deserve no less. We need to start organizing a bold contract campaign now, one that will reduce the number of courses over which faculty are spread, provide parity pay for part-timers, and reverse tuition increases at CUNY. Such a campaign would build on the increased professionalism achieved by the latest contract and inspire full-timers, part-timers and students to work together to continue the building of a new CUNY.

– David Arnow  
Professor, Computer & Information Science, Brooklyn College

**THE ONLY** way to break through is to get the governor and other politicians on our side. We need to use our endorsements to get support from the political establishment – otherwise they're wasted.

– Paul Weiss  
Professor, Health & Physical Education, Queensborough CC



At BCC: Bob Beuka, PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant & Chapter Chair Marianne Pita



From left, Diversity Committee Chair Samuel Farrell; Anne Friedman of the PSC Executive Council; committee members Joyce Moorman and David Hatchett, who is also an Executive Council member

**A LOT** of people don't understand the nature of struggle. That's what we should talk about at chapter meetings. Let's define that, talk about that. It takes time to win – so you have to keep at it, and you have to keep up the tradition of struggle. If you decide to do nothing, then you can be sure nothing will happen. So let's get involved, let's participate, and let's understand what it takes to make change.

– Alvin Tramble  
Assistant to HEO, Bronx CC



In the Sociology Department at Baruch College: Ken Guest, Glenn Petersen, PSC First Vice President Steve London and VP for Part-Time Personnel Marcia Newfield



## CALENDAR

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26: 5:30 pm** / Presentation and discussion of the proposed PSC budget for 2006-2007, before the Delegate Assembly. At the PSC's new location, 61 Broadway, in the 16th floor union hall. Open to all PSC members; picture ID is required to enter the building.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 30: 6:00 pm** / First of three PSC environmental workshops: "Indoor air quality & mold on campus." At the new PSC office, 61 Broadway, 15th floor. Register at 212-354-1252. Dinner served at 5:30.

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6: 1:00 pm** / PSC Retirees Chapter meeting at the new union office, 61 Broadway, 16th floor union hall.

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6: 6:00 pm** / Second of three PSC environmental workshops: "Effective problem-solving on your campus: Part I." At the new PSC office, 61 Broadway, 15th floor. Register at 212-354-1252.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10: 6:00 pm** / Labor Goes to the Movies at the new PSC office, 61 Broadway, in the 16th floor union hall. "Point of Attack" (2004) is about the mass roundup of Muslim and South Asian immigrants after 9/11. Contact drajendra@pscmail.org (no RSVPs).

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13: 6:00 pm** / Last of three PSC environmental workshops: "Effective problem-solving on your campus: Part II." At the new PSC office, 61 Broadway, 15th floor. Register at 212-354-1252.

**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16: 6:00 pm** / PSC Women's Committee meeting at the new union office, 61 Broadway, 15th floor. For info, e-mail Norah Chase, at Nchase391@aol.com.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17: 7:00 pm** / Poetry of Resistance, a union poetry reading for peace and justice featuring CUNY faculty, students and staff, is a fundraiser for Dillard University. At the new PSC office, 61 Broadway, in the 16th floor union hall.

### Health care reform: a PSC symposium

**Saturday, December 2**

10 am – 4 pm

Hunter School of Social Work  
East 79th St. & Lexington Ave.

For more info, contact Francine Brewer  
at frangail@earthlink.net.

### Correction

The September *Clarion* article on asbestos at Bronx Community College incorrectly stated that both floor and ceiling tiles in a professor's office contained asbestos. In fact, this was true only for the floor tiles. *Clarion* regrets the error, and thanks Martin Pulver, professor of chemistry and the college's environmental health and safety officer, for alerting us.

# The tenure change

## A guide for new faculty

**Q.** What's happening with tenure?

**A.** The timeline for tenure at CUNY has recently changed. The PSC negotiated the terms of the change with CUNY as part of the most recent PSC/CUNY contract, and the new timeline has become part of New York State law. For faculty with tenure start appointment dates prior to Fall 2006, the "tenure clock" is five years. This means that most professors with an appointment date in September 2001 became tenured at the beginning of September 2006 (five years). In the future, the "tenure clock" will be seven years. A professor with an appointment date of September 2007

occurs after five years.)

If, however, you were hired on a tenure-track professorial line and your appointment effective date is September 1, 2006, you have a choice of either the five-year or the seven-year tenure clocks. Faculty who were initially appointed to a tenure-track position on or after October 1, 2005 but effective (for tenure purposes) September 1, 2006 – and faculty who were in non-tenure-track positions such as Instructor or Lecturer prior to September 1, 2006 and were initially appointed to a tenure-track line ef-

versities and that it is appropriate for the City University of New York. Some CUNY faculty, especially in the senior colleges, strongly supported the proposal for a longer tenure clock; others, especially in the community colleges, strongly opposed it. For several years management had been working to obtain the required State Legislature approval for the change.

**Q.** What is the union's position on the change?

**A.** The union blocked CUNY's attempt to change the tenure clock in Albany without negotiating with the PSC or providing any new benefits. The PSC argued that a longer tenure clock should be linked to the research environment that typically accom-

panies a seven-year untenured period – including released time for junior faculty and well-funded sabbaticals. As part of the negotiations for the 2002-2007 contract, the PSC achieved an increase in re-

signed time for junior faculty from 12 to 24 hours, and an increase in sabbatical pay from 50% to 80%. In return, the union agreed to support the legislative change in the tenure clock. Members approved the change this past spring. The increases in reassigned time and sabbatical pay go into effect this semester.

**Q.** If I am a new hire this year, which should I choose – five years or seven?

**A.** It's *your* decision, not management's or anyone else's. You will receive 24 hours of reassigned time, to be used within your first five annual appointments, re-



Nancy Doniger

would expect to become tenured in September 2014 (seven years).

**Q.** How does the change in the "tenure clock" affect me?

**A.** If your appointment to a tenure-track faculty position was effective *before* September 1, 2006, you will not be affected by the change in the tenure clock. Your time-to-tenure will remain five years. You will also experience no change in the tenure clock if you are a college laboratory technician or a teacher at the Hunter Campus Schools. (Faculty hired on Lecturer lines are also unaffected by the change; appointment with a Certificate of Continuous Employment still

effective September 1, 2006 – are entitled to choose between the five- or seven-year tenure clocks. The option exists just for this one-year cohort, whose appointment coincides with the change in timeline. Faculty in this cohort will have a year to make their decision, and the choice is irrevocable.

**Q.** Why was the tenure clock changed?

**A.** CUNY management has been seeking to make this change for several years. But they tried to do it unilaterally – without negotiation with the PSC. Management's view is that seven years is the standard tenure clock at research uni-

versities and that it is appropriate for the City University of New York. Some CUNY faculty, especially in the senior colleges, strongly supported the proposal for a longer tenure clock; others, especially in the community colleges, strongly opposed it. For several years management had been working to obtain the required State Legislature approval for the change.

**Q.** Do I need to decide right now?

**A.** No. You have until September 1, 2007 to notify your department chair in writing of your choice. It's a big decision. Talk to colleagues who have recently received tenure and consult with your department chair. Also feel free to contact the PSC if you have questions or concerns.

**Q.** What about reassigned time?

**A.** As part of the new contract, junior faculty appointed September 1, 2006 and after will receive 24 hours of full-paid reassigned time in which to do research, scholarship or cultural work in their areas of expertise. The reassigned time is your right under the contract; it is an entitlement and part of your workload – not an award or a grant. It was negotiated by the PSC to give untenured faculty the time they need to prepare for the tenure decision. The college administration has the right to approve the *scheduling* of the 24 hours, and you should work with your department chairperson to develop the schedule that works best for you. Some faculty members prefer to take three hours each semester to lighten the teaching load. Others prefer to take six or nine hours a semester to focus on academic projects. You may feel pressure to take reassigned time in a way that's not really helpful to your work. If so, let someone at the PSC know. It's *your* reassigned time. (Faculty appointed between September 2002 and September 2005 continue to be eligible for 12 hours of reassigned time in their first three years.)

**Q.** Are there greater expectations of me because I'm getting 24 hours of reassigned time or because I may have seven years till tenure?

**A.** If you hear that you need to do more than others in the past because you're getting 24 hours of reassigned time or because of the longer tenure clock, let someone from the PSC know. Chancellor Goldstein is on record as opposing an increase in the requirements for tenure with the new tenure clock. There should be no increased expectations over past requirements.

**Q.** How do I get more information about tenure, reassigned time or other issues?

**A.** Contact your chapter chair (see the PSC website for a list: [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org)), or call the union office directly: 212-354-1252. There are always counselors on hand to answer questions.

## PSC environmental workshops

Want to improve your working environment? Are you concerned about air quality? Would you like to know how to identify health problems – and find solutions?

The PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs will host a series of three workshops on health conditions and environmental rights in the workplace, facilitated by Dave Newman of the New York Committee for Occupational Health and Safety (NYCOSH).

All workshops will be held at the new PSC office, on the 15th floor of

61 Broadway in Manhattan. Each session runs from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, with dinner served beforehand at 5:30. Participants who attend all three sessions will receive a Certificate of Environmental Training. Register by calling the PSC Health and Safety Desk at 212-354-1252.

● **Monday, Oct. 30: Indoor Air Quality and mold on your campus.**

Heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems (HVAC). How to investigate and get rid of mold and toxic substances.

● **Monday, Nov. 6: Effective problem-solving on your campus: Part I**

How to identify problems and find solutions. Learn to conduct 'walk-throughs' and arrange labor-management meetings.

● **Monday, Nov. 13: Effective problem-solving on your campus: Part II**

Conducting surveys and documenting problems. Learn how to identify and solve programs with fire and emergency evacuation; campus construction; workers' compensation, and more.

*Adapted from a flyer produced by the PSC Junior Faculty Organizing Project in collaboration with the PSC negotiating team and rank-and-file activists at Kingsborough Community College.*



## Dental changes coming soon

Improvements in the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund dental benefit, made possible by the new contract, will be announced in November. The changes are scheduled to take effect after the first of next year.

"The trustees and Fund staff have been working hard to develop the best options, together with our consultants, the Segal Company," said the Welfare Fund's Steve London.

Once final decisions are made, the Fund will send members a detailed description of the new dental benefit options by mail; information will also be posted on the union's website ([www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org)). — PH

## Health insurance change period

Full-time CUNY employees may change their choice of health care plan during the annual transfer period, which this year runs from October 16 to November 17. Newly selected plans take effect January 1. Contact your campus human resources office for details.

Retirees with City health insurance are also eligible to change plans this year, during the same dates; their next opportunity to change will be Fall 2008. For applications, contact the NYC Office of Labor Relations at 212-513-0470.

Part-timers who currently receive health insurance coverage through the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund will also have the option to change carriers (either Empire or HIP HMO), from October 15 through November 15. To request a change, see your college human resources office or call the Welfare Fund at 212-354-5230. — DL

# False alarm on City pensions

By PETER HOGNESS

Readers of *The New York Times* — especially municipal employees — were startled by a flurry of articles in August on New York City's public pensions. The *Times* gravely warned of "a potential future shortfall of up to \$49 billion" — an alarming figure, since that is almost as much as the City's entire yearly budget.

About one-third of PSC members belong to the Teachers' Retirement System, or TRS, one of several different pension systems for City employees. After the *Times* ran five articles within two weeks on City pensions, repeatedly citing the \$49 billion figure, some CUNY retirees began to worry about whether they would keep getting their pension checks next year.

Are City pensions really in trouble?

It's worth paying close attention to a few key words in the *Times*'s scary statements: "potential" and "up to." What the *Times* did, in essence, was present a long-run, worst-case scenario — unlikely ever to actually happen — in tones that suggested it was a real and imminent danger.

The amount of money that NYC budgets for distribution to its pension systems, including TRS, is based on the assumption of a long-term average annual return of 8% from its investments in the stock market and other financial instruments, a figure based on their historical performance. If the actual return turns out to be lower — not just for a year or two, but consistently, for many, many years — then more money would need to be contributed to ensure the system's future ability to pay for retirees' pensions.

This is where the \$49 billion fig-

## NY Times account falls short

ure cited so prominently by the *Times* comes from: it is the amount of extra money that would be needed if the City's pension investments were to earn a long-term average of 5.5%, instead of 8%. While this is theoretically possible, there is virtually no economist who predicts such a drastic change in market behavior, sustained over a period of decades. It is extremely unlikely.

### New York's constitution protects public pensions.

But shouldn't a pension fund be prepared for anything, even the unlikely? Yes, it should. And there is no reason to think that NYC's pension funds, including TRS, are not.

If such a dramatic change in investment returns did occur, and a new, lower long-term average became the historic norm, this would not happen overnight. It would take decades — which means that pension funds would have plenty of time to make necessary adjustments.

Pension funds must predict how much money they will need to pay retirees' benefits far, far into the future. And when making financial predictions 30 or more years into the future, people inevitably get something wrong. But actuaries constantly adjust those predictions as new information comes in. As the *Times* itself reported — a week after its first alarming story — "they are always phasing in the corrections, slowly but surely, year after year."

### SECURE

The value of a pension fund can be calculated in many different ways, for different purposes. The worst-case figure of a \$49 billion gap came from just one of the different methods used by NYC's chief actuary, Robert North. But North criticized the way the *Times* picked out this number and used it for scaremongering.

"Participants in the NYC retirement systems should know that

their pensions are secure," North wrote in a sharply worded letter to the editor. North added that the City's method of calculating how much money must be set aside for pensions "produces more conservative results than the methods used by most other public pension plans."

This last is a key point. Even the *Times* conceded that NYC "has often been held out as an exemplar in funding its pensions." This point, however, was buried deep down in the article, almost 2,000 words after the first of repeated references to "the \$49 billion gap."

### FISCALLY CONSERVATIVE

The head of Missouri's public retirement system told the *Times* that New York City's actuarial method is "perhaps the most fiscally conservative of all methods available." And a municipal credit analyst with Standard & Poor's noted that NYC's approach helps build up assets more rapidly than alternative methods. These statements, however, were reported a full week after the *Times*'s initial scare story.

It is certainly possible for a public pension system to be underfunded. And some, like that of San Diego, have gotten in trouble as a result. But there is no evidence that this is true in New York. In fact, as a result of the more conservative approach used by North, NYC has been increasing its pension contributions in recent years, from \$1.1 billion in 2001 to \$4.7 billion this year. This has helped adjust for recent years of low returns in the stock market.

Mel Aaronson, UFT Treasurer and one of three teacher representatives on the TRS Board, told *Clarion* that he and the other trustees "will vigilantly monitor the funding of the Retirement System to ensure adequate funding." He emphasized that TRS is currently quite sound. "TRS has enough funds to pay retirees' pensions for their entire lifetimes,

and will also have enough to pay all those who have not yet retired." CUNY employees are also in a strong legal position, Aaronson noted: "The constitution of the State of New York guarantees that no public employee pension benefit can ever be diminished or impaired."

The benefits of future TRS members — employees not yet hired by CUNY or the City — do not have this same legal guarantee. If their benefits face a threat, it does not come from a hypothetical \$49 billion figure. It comes from Mayor Bloomberg, who has announced that he will seek union concessions on pensions in order to cut the City's contributions. If Bloomberg is serious about pursuing this course, he will be following in the footsteps of the MTA, which provoked a strike by transit workers last December with its hard line on this issue.

The language of the *Times*'s articles is worth examination. Its news reports called NYC's public pensions "the envy of private-sector workers," and labeled their cost-of-living adjustments "a benefit virtually unheard of in the private sector."

### NO LUXURY

The *Times* did not describe what that cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) actually amounts to. It does not keep up with the rate of inflation but is instead limited to one-half of that, and applies only to the first \$18,000 of pension income. This COLA is more of a "diet COLA." In the current year, it adds up to a maximum of \$23 a month. While it's good to have this money, it is no one's ticket to a life of luxury.

The *Times*'s sense of fiscal outrage is curiously selective. When taxes on business owners and the wealthy were cut under Mayor Giuliani — for a loss of more than \$1 billion a year in City revenue — there were no front-page exposés. If Mayor Bloomberg decides to pick a fight with the unions on City pensions, it is fairly clear which side the *Times* will be on.

## PSC members march on Labor Day



Vera Weekes (right), co-chair of the PSC Legislative Committee, with the union's contingent at this year's Labor Day parade

## Retroactive pay is pensionable

By CLARISSA GILBERT WEISS  
PSC Director of Pension & Welfare Benefits

The retroactive salary increase you may have received in September or October is pensionable. Exactly how the pension contributions work depends on the pension system you're in.

### Q. Is the retroactive money pensionable?

A. Yes. If you are in the Optional Retirement Plan (e.g., TIAA/CREF or Guardian), your required contribution will be deducted proportionately from your retroactive pay. The employer, CUNY, will make its contributions at your present rate.

If you are in TRS and if you normally make contributions to your pension plan (i.e., the ASF account in Tiers I and II or the MCAF in Tier IV), deductions will be taken proportionately from your retroactive pay.

### Q. If I am retiring or have retired before the contract is implemented, do I still get all the pension benefits?

A. Yes. If you are in the Optional Retirement Plan and have already retired, CUNY will make contributions on your behalf for the period when you were actively employed, and so will you.

If you are in TRS, your pension is based on your salary at the time of

retirement. Although the lump sum retroactive pay will not be credited as "salary" for the year when it is paid, the salary that is the basis of your benefit will be the new contractually correct salary. If you are retired, TRS will recalculate your pension benefit to reflect the new salary schedules.

### Q. Will the retroactive money have TDA (Tax-Deferred Annuity) or SRA (Supplemental Retirement Annuity) deductions made from it?

A. If you normally have deductions made to your TDA or SRA accounts, the retroactive monies will also have deductions made.



## HEALTH CARE

# The unraveling of private insurance

By **LEONARD RODBERG**  
Queens College

*"Rising health care costs are undermining the institution of employer-based coverage. We... may well be seeing the whole institution unraveling.... [This] is the byproduct of what should be a good thing: advances in medical technology."*

— Paul Krugman and Robin Wells,  
"The Health Care Crisis and What to Do  
About It," *New York Review of Books*,  
March 23, 2006

Americans spend more on health care than anyone else on earth. We are first in spending, but, according to recent surveys, 14th in public satisfaction with our health system. Per person, our government spending *alone* is more than government *plus* private spending on health care in any other country. And yet our health statistics are comparatively poor, with life expectancy 24th in the world, infant mortality 27th, and more than 45 million people without any health insurance at all.

So why does the US spend so much and get so little in return? Because of one simple fact: we are alone in the world in relying on private insurance to fund health care.

## ONLY IN AMERICA

Many countries have a "single-payer" system, like Canada, in which the government directly funds a system of universal coverage. Some countries (e.g., France or Germany) use employer-supported, nonprofit sickness funds — industry-wide insurance plans created with the support of their union movements. But every economically developed nation funds its health care system through some kind of government-run regulatory or funding mechanism that makes sure everyone has coverage and that costs are controlled.

In the US, employer-based health insurance was a significant advance when it was created by the labor movement in the mid-1930s. It was greatly expanded during World War II and reached its peak of coverage in the 1950s. But now this system, and the collection of private insurance companies it spawned, is a barrier to access to health care for millions of Americans, including union members.

America's current health insurance system is:

- Wasteful. More than 20% of our spending on health care in this country is simply for administering our multipayer, for-profit insurance system.
- Inflationary. The insurance system is good at denying or delaying care, but incapable of controlling costs and encouraging the efficient use of medical technology.
- Obsolete. It is focused on treating illness when the major modern diseases — heart disease, cancer and stroke — are most effectively dealt with through prevention.

As costs rise, the number of employers who offer health insurance to their employees has steadily declined. Over just the last six years, costs rose by 87% — and the percentage of employers providing health insurance to their employees fell from 69% to below 60%.

## SHIFTING COSTS

Those employers that continue to offer coverage pass more and more of the cost on to their employees. Employees now pay an average of 20% of the premiums in plans of-

ferred by their employers, on top of the rising co-pays and deductibles.

As employers drop coverage, government has to pick up many of those who are left without insurance — particularly through Medicaid, which covers some low-income people, especially children. In turn, the explosive growth of Medicaid creates financial problems for many states and localities, which share Medicaid costs with the federal government.

## UNAFFORDABLE

With the employer-based system leaving increasing numbers of Americans without health coverage, some people propose requiring that individuals purchase insurance to solve the problem. The State of Massachusetts recently passed legislation to create an "affordable" insurance plan and require everyone without other insurance to purchase such a policy. The American Medical Association supports such an individual mandate, and other states are considering the idea.

What's wrong with it? After all, anyone owning a car is required to have car insurance. The simple answer is that most people

who don't have health insurance today could not afford to buy a policy that would really give them adequate coverage. Today, the average policy for an individual costs more than \$4,000 per year and, for a family, over \$10,000 each year. Clearly someone earning the minimum wage (\$10,000 per year for full-time work) could not afford to purchase health insurance for her or his family.

While the Massachusetts plan envisions state subsidies that might lower the price for some people, these will be too limited to assure access to quality care. In the end, residents of Massachusetts will be required to spend a lot of money in exchange for very poor coverage.

## FOR-PROFIT PROBLEMS

Nor is an individual mandate the solution from the point of view of the nation's health system. As one wag put it, "If GM can't keep down the cost of health care, how can we expect Mom and Dad to do it?" Employers have a lot more bargaining power than individual consumers, and they can't keep a lid on costs.

Ultimately, it is not employer-based insur-

ance that is failing, but the inefficient and increasingly unaffordable private, for-profit health insurance system.

The PSC, along with more than 150 other unions and union locals, is supporting the approach embodied in legislation introduced in Congress by Rep. John Conyers (D-MD). This bill, H.R. 676, the Expanded and Improved Medicare For All Act, builds on the success of the Medicare program in providing efficient, comprehensive coverage for more than 40 million elderly Americans on Social Security. This publicly funded "single-payer" plan gives patients a free choice of doctor and hospital, has much lower administrative costs than private insurance (3% vs. nearly 30%), and can provide the basis for a unified funding mechanism that would cover everyone while spending no more than we do now.

Instead of limited reforms that keep the private insurance companies in place (and which will ultimately fail), a Medicare For All system would be simpler, less costly and more equitable, and would cover everyone. And it would be better for our health.

*Len Rodberg is a member of the PSC Health Care Reform Committee, sponsor of a Dec. 2 symposium on health care reform. See p. 8 for details.*

## The US spends more, but gets less.

## POEMS

# Three by Idra Novey

### The Good Season

Morning, and the woman  
in the studio below  
begins to coax her first student  
at the piano, which notes  
to play softer, play slower,  
and I think of Henry,  
repeating his theory on the lottery,  
that the best numbers come  
between two beats  
of hesitation. He never won,  
never bought the fleet  
of red pickups he'd promised.  
And at the thought  
of those mythic vehicles,  
my grandpa Henry fumbling  
with the sacks of coins  
he'd packed and re-packed for us,  
trying to make of them  
a more imposing legacy,  
I slip deeper into the bedding,  
listening for the lesson  
to end, the boy to master  
Bach's Fantasy and Fugue,  
and cringe for him, sitting there  
idle, that quiet reckoning—

the terrible likelihood  
of failure—while my neighbor  
plays it through, song rising  
through the floor, fluid  
and assured, free of error.

### The Detainee

Little remained of her  
beyond the flame in her knees  
and a faint ringing  
in the farthest reaches  
of her mind. Outside,  
somewhere, she knew  
a girl still dragged a stick  
through wet sand, sang  
a song to herself, the lyrics  
a mix of radio jingles  
and gibberish.  
And within the girl  
lay a valley, a lake,  
and a chestnut horse  
in the meadow grass,  
its neck lowered for a drink.  
From within the lake  
rose a gray calm,  
and once again  
she sat up against  
the damp wall  
of her cell, waiting  
for some light  
to give way.

### The Need for Roots

A man lifts a blue leather volume of Simone Weil from '53, brushes off a film of dirt. "Buried," the vendor says, "in a yard with those other leather ones. Two kids brought them all in a wheelbarrow." The man nods, it's a common story eleven years after Pinochet: the unearthing of a book buried in fear now found in a yard, or basement, and swiftly sold like the furniture of the dead.

He presses the cover back, remembering his own edition of *La Necesidad de Raíces*, the night his daughter burned it in a firepit, hours before soldiers searched their house. "I'll give you 500 pesos for it," he offers the vendor, the cost of an ice cream, a palmful of mints.

The vendor slips his hands into his pockets, thinks how awkward it is to barter over what's been buried. And then the bartering begins.

*Idra Novey's chapbook The Next Country was a winner of the 2005 Poetry Society of America Chapbook Contest. Her selected translations of Brazilian poet Paulo Henrique Britto received a PEN Translation Fund Award and will be published by BOA Editions. Novey has taught at Columbia University and the Catholic University of Chile in Valparaíso, where she lived for a number of years while working as a translator.*



## ORGANIZING

# The union & the war

The PSC first took a stand against war with Iraq after a two-month period of open discussion in 2002. Discussions on campus, in Clarion and among delegates made clear that a large majority of PSC members opposed Bush's invasion. Today most of the labor movement has spoken out against the Iraq war, including the American Federation of Teachers and the AFL-CIO.

But the war is not just a national issue – it affects us locally as well. Clarion recently asked four PSC members about their experience in local campus anti-war organizing; below is some of what they had to say.

James Davis is assistant professor of English at Brooklyn College; Bob Cowen is professor of mathematics at Queens College; Suzan Moss is associate professor of physical education and wellness at Bronx Community College, and coordinator of its Dance Workshop; John Pittman is professor of philosophy at John Jay and a member of the PSC Executive Council.

## Q: Why do you think the war is relevant to the PSC?

**Suzan Moss:** As long as spending on the war goes unquestioned, there will never be enough money for public education. You can really see the financial impact of the war if you look around at the buildings in CUNY. We've got holes in the ceiling and leaks in the walls. Buildings go without repairs for years at a time. Yet the government keeps approving ever larger and larger military budgets, and devouring resources that could be used for education. We must protest.

It's also a question of caring about our students. When you see them getting false information from military recruiters, and then making decisions that could get them killed, you have to do something. Our students need to hear from veterans about what life is really like in the military, particularly for those who have served in Iraq.

**John Pittman:** Once the government has spent \$200 billion on the war, that money is no longer available for the things we really need. It's been taken off the table, it's gone and we're not going to get it. That's a big part of what puts the squeeze on us here at CUNY. Unionism comes down to reclaiming the pie – and if we want more money for public education, we can't afford to ignore the war.

With hundreds of billions of dollars at stake, the war is very much a "bread-and-butter" issue. So we have, as educators and unionists, an immediate interest in mobilizing to bring an end to this unjust war.

**Bob Cowen:** The monetary costs of this war are enormous. However, we shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that if the war ended tomorrow, the money would automatically go to social programs. Without strong opposition, the money will go to further tax relief for corporations and the wealthy. And we will be told there is no money for our basic needs.

Increasingly we are hearing from Republicans and many Democrats that in order for America to stay competitive in the world economy, American workers must accept less in the way of pensions and health benefits. When unions representing state and municipal workers come to the bargaining table, we are told that there is no money to meet our demands – despite the budget surpluses.

The war is one part of a right-wing politi-

cal agenda. If we don't change this toxic political climate there will be no bread, nor butter, offered for us, now or in the future.

**James Davis:** Our students are well-situated to understand the trade-off the federal government is making, between military spending and spending on higher education and social programs. They can see that tuition hikes and threats to student loans are a function of some very bad priorities among public officials, and some of them saw the contract struggle of their professors and staff in the same light. They can see the government's hostility toward funding education, and the role the war budget plays in that calculus.

**Pittman:** That's very true. And sometimes it may seem logical for campus anti-war organizing to focus on students, because in many ways they're the ones most directly affected, the ones most likely to be killed. But I think it's equally important to organize our colleagues who work at CUNY. They are also greatly affected by the war, by the disappearing budget and by how it changes the political and intellectual atmosphere here for all of us.

**Davis:** This war's a concern for our union not just because it's an assault on social justice, which is something every union should care about, but also because of what it's meant for the freedom of expression, the right to dissent and the right to critical information – of particular concern to us in academia.

**Pittman:** Those issues weigh heavily at John Jay, where the criminal justice "mission" of the college means there's more reluctance among some to look critically at policies conducted in the name of "anti-terrorism." Still, we had a very successful meeting last May with Michael Ratner of the Center for Constitutional Rights discussing some of the Guantánamo cases. It was eye-opening for many of our students.

**Moss:** I think anti-war work can also make our union stronger because it helps bring in new people. I first got involved with the union because of its anti-war organizing. Most of the faculty and staff who have gotten involved in anti-war work at BCC are active in the union – anti-war organizing has brought new people and new energy into our union chapter.

## Q: Could you describe some of the anti-war organizing on your campus?

**Davis:** Anti-war activity hasn't been as formally organized at Brooklyn College as on some other campuses, but in 2005 some of us began to organize a more visible anti-war presence on campus. Fortunately lots of students became



Peter Hogness

BMCC's Segundo Pantoja and family

involved as well. We've made a point of working with veterans among the BC student body.

Last semester we brought in speakers from Iraq Vets Against the War, as well as someone from the ACLU to discuss the current assault on civil liberties. We've combined educational events like these with in-the-streets activism.

We organized a march from the campus to a nearby recruiting station at Flatbush and Nostrand Avenues, where we held a banner and placards, chanted, blew whistles and handed out counter-recruitment information. This was very well received by the public, and helped galvanize our group. This event and the vigil we held on the main quad when the 2,000th U.S. soldier was killed have been our largest activities so far.

**Cowen:** At Queens, we formed the PSC Anti-War Committee, which includes faculty, students and staff. Also we reached out to teachers and students at Townsend Harris High School, next to our campus and affiliated with Queens College.

We've organized a range of activity – from counter-recruitment work, to a monthly film screening, to an on-campus protest that

mourned the CUNY students who've been killed in the Iraq war.

When we organized for the last march on Washington, we filled two buses with faculty, students and staff from Queens and Townsend Harris. For many of the students, especially the high school students, this was their first time protesting anything and, as we heard on the buses going home, they were very excited about the experience and wanted to continue anti-war activity.

## Q: Why do you choose to organize on campus?

**Moss:** I live in Rockland County, and sometimes I think, "Maybe I should just organize at home, and get on the bus with my friends and neighbors." But I come back to Bronx Community College when I see my students enlist. It drives me nuts to see them decide to enlist based on lies. I feel I have to offer students at BCC an alternative view.

Financial difficulties make our students especially vulnerable to recruiters. Rising tuition increases the pressures on our students, and makes them even more likely to enlist. Many join for job training and pensions. They believe what the recruiters tell them, and they don't realize that during a war all promises made by the government can be broken.

It is students like ours who are really fighting this war. Recruiters come to our campuses – to BCC, and the rest of CUNY. They don't send them to hang around at Harvard or Yale. Our students really need any alternative information we can provide.

**Cowen:** We have started an anti-recruitment drive on campus to counter the military recruiters who show up from time to time. Once a week, at the main student dining area, we handed out counter-recruitment literature, most of which we obtained on the web. (Especially good is the downloadable "Sgt. Abe the Honest Recruiter" flyer, which explains exactly what the enlistment contract *really* means.) We also give students forms that permit them to opt out of the requirement, under the Solomon Amendment, that colleges furnish student information to the military.

Our PSC chapter requested that we be informed when military recruiters come to the campus and that students be made aware on the college's website of their right to opt out of having their personal information reported to the military. As a member of our committee, Tony O'Brien, aptly put it, there's a distinction between "compliance" with the law and "complicity." The president eventually agreed to both our requests and we are working with him to see that they are implemented.

**Pittman:** It is a point of particular pride for me about the PSC that we take an active interest in the well-being of our students and their multiracial communities as well as our own working conditions. When we base our unionism on principle – when we fight against tuition indexing, against the defunding of society that disfigures the lives of CUNY students – we not only stand to gain our students' solidarity, but that of many others in this city as well.

## How the war affects us at CUNY

### Clarion OCTOBER 2006

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## WORLD IN BRIEF

### Too many secular liberals?

In September, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad called on students to purge liberal and secular faculty from the country's universities. Ahmedinejad told a group of students to pressure their college administrations. "Students should shout at the president and ask why liberal and secular university lecturers are present in the universities," he said.

Last year, an ayatollah was appointed to head Tehran University, the country's oldest and largest, despite student protests. Early this year, dozens of liberal teachers and university professors were put into retirement.

"This is the beginning of a so-called cultural revolution," said Saeed Al-e Agha, a Tehran University professor, to Nasser Karimi of the Associated Press. "Ahmadinejad and his allies plan to sweep their opponents from the universities. They want to rule the brains of youth there."

### Oaxaca strike continues

On September 21, 5,000 striking teachers and grass-roots activists from Oaxaca, Mexico, set out on a three-week, 300-mile march to Mexico City. The teachers' strike, which began on May 22, has grown into a broader democratic movement demanding the departure of Oaxaca Gov. Ulises Ruiz, widely viewed as corrupt and repressive.

Negotiations in Mexico City between the federal Interior Minister and the Oaxacan movement have moved slowly, in part because the teachers' union and its allies take days to consult with members when new questions emerge in the discussions.

Tensions rose at the start of October, after navy helicopters and aircraft buzzed protesters' barricades, and detachments of federal police have been seen heading for Oaxaca's capital. "We will not accept them intimidating us," declared teachers' union leader Rogelio Pensamiento.

# Dept. chairs meet at PSC

By PETER HOGNESS

In September, PSC officers sat down with department chairs from across CUNY to discuss provisions of the new union contract. Close to 100 chairs and their representatives attended the two meetings – one on September 8 for chairs at community colleges, and another a week later for those at senior colleges and doctoral programs. Union staff who work on grievances, arbitrations and legal affairs also took part.

"I certainly learned a lot," said Andrew Beveridge, chair of the Sociology Department at Queens College. "It was very useful to have a clear union perspective on what's in the contract, so that we don't have to rely only on how it is characterized by our administration."

### ARMED WITH INFORMATION

Beveridge said it hadn't taken long to put this information to work: "I've used what I learned already to tell the [college] administration that I know there's plenty of money to support sabbaticals and these other new things in the contract," he told *Clarion*. "So it was very useful to get that information out there."

Andrea Boyar, chair of Lehman College's Health Sciences Department, said, "For me, the meeting was valuable in that information about new faculty members was made much clearer – in terms of their 24 hours of released time and the change in the tenure clock. That I found very helpful." Boyar noted that the two sessions, held at the PSC's new office at 61 Broadway, "brought many people who don't normally participate in union meetings to the union."

"I just assumed my position as chair in July, so everything has been a learning process," said Myung-Soo Lee, chair of Marketing and International Business at Baruch.

At the start of the semester, Lee said, he hadn't been able to answer some questions from members of his department. "Everything was

## Discuss new contract provisions



Phil Eggers, chair of the English Department at BMCC, and Sandra Hanson, chair of the English Department at LaGuardia

crystal clear after leaving the session," he said. "Now I can answer the questions of my departmental colleagues with confidence."

Lee said that the meeting was helpful even on topics with which he was already more familiar. "Many of those points I may have heard here or there," he explained. "But it's not definitive until I hear from those who were directly involved in the contract negotiations."

Bernard Klein has been chair of the Social Science Department at Kingsborough Community College for 40 years, and he said that most of the discussion about the contract was not new to him. Still, "these sessions are worthwhile," Klein told *Clarion*. "I saw that many people were not so familiar with it," he said. "And I got clearer on some aspects which were not quite clear before."

Jo Ann Wein, chair of the Art Department at Queensborough Community College, said it was important to learn that the new contract

not only contains the funding needed to increase the rate of sabbatical pay – it provides additional money to fund a larger number of sabbaticals. This is how accurate information increases department chairs' independence, she said.

"I remember Barbara Bowen telling us, 'The administration is going to try to take control of the contract and tell you what can and cannot be accomplished,'" said Wein. "She said, 'Don't let them do that! It is *your* contract – and if you are having any difficulties, call the union office and we will go to bat for you.'"

### 'IT IS YOUR CONTRACT'

"It was very heartening to hear her say, 'It's your contract,'" Wein recalled. "It gave us a feeling of power, rather than powerlessness, in the face of the administration."

One of the meetings' presenters was Charles Molesworth, head of the PSC Grievance Policy Committee and former chair of the Queens College English Department. The September sessions were particularly timely, Molesworth said, "as

we had just defeated management's attempts to exclude chairs from the bargaining unit."

Anthony Udeogalanya, chair of the Biology Department at Medgar Evers College, said that learning details of the change from a five-year to seven-year tenure clock had helped him give department members the right advice. Beyond providing practical information, Udeogalanya said, the session served a broader purpose: "It was very collegial. It allowed faculty of different CUNY campuses to get together and share ideas, and there is a great need for this. I would recommend more regular meetings of this kind."

### JUST A START

On that point, there seemed to be widespread agreement. "This meeting was incredibly useful," said Jane Gallagher, chair of the Biology Department at City College. "I think the PSC would do well to have more interaction with [department] chairs. Being a chair can be an absolutely miserable job, and any help you can get is gold." In this case, she said, "there's a lot of misinformation about the contract that gets spread around, and it was important to correct that."

Boyar and Beveridge also urged more regular meetings in the future, and Klein suggested that PSC officers meet with chairs to discuss contract demands before negotiations with CUNY begin.

PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, who is also executive officer of the doctoral program in social welfare at the Graduate Center, said that the September meetings were just a start. "I was struck by the sense of dialog," he said. "It went beyond the presenters offering information, to the department chairs talking among themselves about their role. The union attempted to create a forum for department chairs to have a university-wide conversation, and we need to continue that in the future." Fabricant encouraged department chairs to contact union officers with any suggestions.

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## 15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

## Talk to your chapter chair

Take a few minutes to talk with your union chapter chair. (A list with contact information is on the "Who's who" page at [www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org).) Introduce yourself if you don't already know her or him. Every chair is participating in the PSC's "listening campaign" (see pages 6 and 7), so now is a

perfect time to discuss the union. What's the biggest issue in your department? Do you have a question about the contract? What do you think the top priority for the union should be? Find out what the chapter has planned for the semester, and the time of the next meeting.