

# Clarion

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



SEPTEMBER 2003



**AFTER 3 YEARS OF PSC ACTION**

## **NEW PLAN FOR GRAD TUITIION**

CUNY will have its first large-scale program for graduate tuition remission under a plan announced by the Graduate Center. The PSC has been pushing for tuition remission in Albany and at CUNY for the past three years. Above left, Patricia Mainardi, professor of art history at the Graduate Center, with Emily Caglayan, graduate teaching fellow. **PAGE 3**

Lisa Quiñones



**LIFE INSURANCE**

**October 15  
deadline**

The old plan will end soon. Find out what you need to know.

**PAGE 8**

**TRANSIT**

**Transit benefit passes  
NY legislature**

PSC lobbying has resulted in legislation for a new benefit for CUNY faculty and staff, which will save you money on your taxes.

**PAGE 7**



**CONTRACT**

**Meet the PSC  
negotiating team**

The PSC bargaining team has begun talks with CUNY for the next contract. The negotiators discuss the key issues in this round.

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**WASHINGTON**

**The Higher Education  
Act will affect you**

President Bush is seeking big changes in the way American universities are funded and regulated – where “efficiency” and “accountability” may replace quality and access.

**PAGE 10**

# UAPC workers stop unfair changes

By MAGGIE DICKINSON

Organizing by PSC members at the University Applications Processing Center (UAPC) was successful in blocking an attempt to assign them new responsibilities without adequate pay.

In the first week of August, employees in the UAPC's Freshman Admissions Department were told by their immediate supervisor that a special consultant was going to come in and cross-train them to do international admissions.

"We're dedicated workers, but this was out-of-title work," said Mary Jane Brown, an employee in Freshman Admissions and a PSC bargaining team member. "We had heard through the grapevine that this was just the tip of the iceberg. Next they would move on to training the Transfer Department and International Admissions until every-

## Say 'no' to extra work without extra pay

one in the three admissions departments was interchangeable. They wanted us to learn three different jobs but still be paid for just one."

So the employees decided to take action. They wrote a letter explaining their position to Howie Kaplan, the supervisor who oversees the admissions departments, and all six workers in Freshman Admissions signed it. The next day they got the response they were hoping for – there would be no cross-training for any of the admissions departments.

### CROSS-TRAINING

This cross-training was just one of many unilateral changes that UAPC management has tried to implement since employees there voted to join the PSC in December. "They have tried everything from



Mary Jane Brown works in Freshman Admissions at the UAPC.

forced overtime to limiting vacation to punish us for joining the PSC and to frustrate our efforts to win a first contract. But we have refused to

give in," said Bernadine Kamwanya, a UAPC employee and PSC bargaining team member.

Management's behavior forced the union to file several unfair labor practice charges at the NLRB, including harassment and failure to bargain in good faith.

On September 3, the PSC was notified that the NLRB had reviewed the evidence presented by the union and by management and had decided to issue a complaint. The next step is a hearing to determine to what extent the UAPC management has violated the law.

UAPC employee Gillian Anderson summed it up this way: "Management doesn't like the fact that they have to deal with a union. But that's the law, and they might as well get used to it."

## CUNY IN BRIEF

### New faculty hires

CUNY will hire 300 new full-time faculty at its six community colleges this year, funded by money from the 12% tuition increase approved this summer. In addition, 400 new faculty are starting at CUNY this fall, many replacing faculty who took the recent early retirement incentive.

The new community college positions amount to a 20% increase in full-time faculty at CUNY's two-year schools. The hiring process for these jobs has already begun, with some positions to be filled this semester based on previous searches. Other searches will begin with the goal of filling positions as soon as possible or by next September. The PSC will offer a workshop in late October to assist current CUNY adjuncts who wish to apply for the full-time positions.

A complete list of which departments are hiring for how many positions at each community college is available on the Web at <http://chronicle.com/jobs/id.php?id=264977&pg=s>.

### Enrollment up

Enrollment for Fall 2003 at CUNY rose 2.4% to 213,952 students, according to preliminary figures released by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research. CUNY officials asserted that the numbers prove that the tuition increase approved this summer has not significantly affected student enrollment. PSC leaders however, noted that many students have nonetheless been priced out of the University. They also noted that reports of overcrowded classrooms are increasing. They also pointed to a new \$4.5 million City Council grant program for community college students, which has eased some of the tuition pain for 4,600 students who have received the grants so far.

First-time freshmen at senior colleges are up 5.3%, while first-time freshmen at community colleges are up 2.9%. Transfer students increased 6%. Information on enrollment by race and ethnicity as well as ESL enrollment was not released.

### Kingsborough president resigns

Byron N. McClenney, president of Kingsborough Community College, resigned. Chancellor Matthew Goldstein announced in September that he intended to recommend Fred B. Malamet, professor of behavioral sciences and human services at Kingsborough, as interim president. Malamet has worked at Kingsborough for over 30 years, in positions including Dean of Academic Affairs, Interim Vice President and Dean of Faculty.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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# Private insurers = bad senior drug plan

● With any important document, it's always important to read the small print, particularly so with legislation.

A perfect example is the effort to privatize Medicare currently before Congress, in the bills HR1 and S1. Seniors are promised a prescription drug benefit and are encouraged by the Bush Administration to support the measures. However, the small print tells another story. This legislation raises the prospect of requiring older Americans to sign up with private insurers. Private carriers do not guarantee they will not raise premiums and they can drop patients at will, can change coverage, even decide to go out of business. But they do nothing to control the skyrocketing costs of prescription drugs.

A different bill before Congress (HR1199) offers a prescription drug benefit not under private insurers, but under Medicare, which would help keep the cost of prescription drugs affordable.

It's important for everyone, especially seniors, to become involved; to understand what the small print means and to speak out on issues that affect all Americans.

Call and/or write to your Congressional Representatives and ask them to support HR1199. It would not only provide seniors with an affordable prescription drug program, but at the same time it would curb uncontrollable prescription drug costs.

Lawrence Kaplan  
Chair Emeritus  
PSC Retirees Chapter

### Don't forget breathing

● I was pleased to see two articles in the Summer issue of *Clarion* dealing with architecture at CUNY. This is certainly a topic whose time has come. I would have liked, however, for *Clarion* to address the fact that the majority of us at CUNY are in deteriorating buildings with little or no air. Indeed, the article about John Jay's newer building designed by Viñoly did not mention that across from that pleasant space lies the horrible North Hall that contains most of John Jay's offices and classrooms, and where the air and noise problems are so bad it is amazing that it has been allowed to remain in operation.

Likewise, in the piece about the Stanford White building at Bronx Community College – a rather grand building, but one located in the midst of a campus where simple human needs, like air conditioning in offices and laboratories and ceiling tiles that stay up, are not being met.

What the articles reminded us about is the fact that it is possible to design and build pleasant, attractive and healthy spaces for education. As a union we have a right to participate in design of our working environments.

Joan Greenbaum  
LaGuardia Chapter Chair  
PSC Health and Safety Coordinator

### 'Hands-on' help is needed

● I very personally related to Stanley Aronowitz's story about his ex-

perience with his mother. I, too, am a caregiver, for an elderly father who is almost deaf and blind and can barely stand. At age 96, Dad is in a wheelchair. In terms of who is the parent and/or the child, while there must be a definite switch of responsibility one must remember, as Beatrice Kachuk reminds us, that needing help should not infantilize a person who has years of experience and knowledge.

As Aronowitz and my colleague Norah Chase suggest, Medicare and Medicaid are not set up to assist elderly people who are in dire need of care. As director of the My Turn Program at Kingsborough and with a doctorate in gerontology, one would think I would be having a cakewalk. That is not the case. *Clarion's* "Resources for Caregiving" (May/June 2003) mentions various agencies, but I can tell you from personal experience that neither they nor any other organization provides the kind of "hands-on" aid that is needed.

The more I think about how the union can be of assistance, the more I think one powerful tool might be to establish an ombudsman to advocate for individual members.

Barbara Ginsberg  
Kingsborough CC

Editor's note: *NYSUT Social Services* (800-342-9810 x6206) can provide can some of this kind of assistance, as described in an article in the December 2002 *Clarion*. (The article is available on the Web at

[www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm](http://www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm).)

### The real culprit(s)

● I enjoyed reading the Summer 2003 issue. I found it to be very informative – until I came to page 10.

H. Bruce Franklin's essay was disingenuous. I agree with his premise that Free Higher Education (FHE) has unwarrantedly been under attack for more than 150 years. I am still upset and distressed that FHE was eradicated from New York City. However, he does not expose the decisions that finally enabled the death of FHE in New York City. "We have met the enemy and he is us."

New York City supported FHE from its own budget. However, just before 1976 Mayor John Lindsey, Mayor Abe Beame and their allies conspired to deliberately bankrupt the City of New York. They hid the financial facts from the public. This "gave the bullet and the gun" to the enemies of FHE and enabled those enemies to deliver the "coup de grace." We are still feeling those repercussions. Yes, there are (and were) enemies of FHE, but we are not blameless.

Open enrollment turned out to be a fiasco. The non-retention rate doubled and the costs became prohibitive and non-productive. That need was appropriately being met by the Community Colleges.

The PSC should be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Abraham Tawil  
Baruch (retired)

# New graduate tuition scholarship plan

By PETER HOGNESS

Graduate students at CUNY have never had a large-scale tuition scholarship program – until now. The Graduate Center has announced that, starting this Fall, the full amount of in-state tuition will be paid for all Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTFs), Science Fellows and Gillece Fellows.

While this is good news for the graduate students working in these positions, it is just a prelude to a more ambitious plan to be phased in starting in Fall 2004. Over the next five years, the number of students receiving full in-state tuition will rise to 1500, or nearly half of the 3500 full-time Ph.D. students at CUNY. The amount of money dedicated to the tuition scholarships will rise from \$2 million this year to \$5.2 million in 2008-2009.

The surprise announcement came after three years of sustained advocacy by the PSC.

"It's a fabulous thing," Patricia Mainardi, Executive Officer (EO) of the art history Ph.D. program, told *Clarion*. "This is what we've wanted all along." Moira Egan, a GTF who is in the doctoral program in history, told *Clarion*, "It will really be very helpful to me personally, but I'm also glad that there will be an ongoing program for future students."

## RECRUITMENT

The plan that begins in Fall 2004 will be used for recruitment of new students, enabling CUNY to offer a support package with five years of tuition remission. Currently enrolled students will not be offered these five-year packages, but will benefit indirectly as the plan frees up existing financial aid.

"Tuition remission is standard practice across the nation for doctoral students, particularly for those who provide service in classrooms," said Graduate Center Provost William Kelly – a point stressed by every faculty member interviewed for this article. "You have to realize that all universities across the U.S. have this," said Mumtaz Kassir, EO for the graduate program in engineering. "CUNY shouldn't be the orphan of American universities. We should be the same as everyone else."

The momentum for change began with the PSC's last contract settlement. "The union began this last year by putting in \$1 million out of its contract, and convincing CUNY to put in another \$1 million," said Kassir. "That made a big difference."

## A union priority for last three years

The PSC "was enormously important in changing the conversation on tuition remission," Kelly agreed. "The union has been staunch in this regard, including it in contract priorities, arranging visits to Albany," he said. "Not that 80th Street was ever unaware that we needed to do better for doctoral students, but a crucial element was that when the union raised [the issue], it became clear that this was a University-wide issue." The last contract settlement, Kelly said, was "a breakthrough moment" for tuition remission.

"It was a priority in the list of demands we drew up in 2000, for a number of reasons," said Mike Fabricant, EO of the Ph.D. program in social welfare and a member of the PSC's bargaining team. "First of all, because these folks are part-time employees teaching at the University. They're PSC members, and they



Mumtaz Kassir, head of the Ph.D. program in engineering

need this benefit." But more generally, said Fabricant, "we were concerned about this as part of what is needed for a really first-rate university, as part of our vision for CUNY."

"Graduate tuition remission enlarges the entire University," said Barbara Bowen, the union's president and chief negotiator. "When you have a wonderful grad student who can't stay or can't come here because there's no support, that's a real loss to CUNY. But if you have a grad student who's not worn down by having to work two jobs in addition to graduate work, they bring a sense of excitement and support to our undergrads when they teach on the campuses."

The \$2 million for tuition remission secured through the PSC contract was used in the 2002-2003 academic year. "It made an enormous difference," said Fabricant. "It was



Mike Fabricant, executive officer of the Graduate Center program in social welfare

more money than I've ever seen since I became part of doctoral studies at CUNY, and you could see the effect on students' academic work." While the contractual funds were used up after one year, Bowen noted that the settlement "set a benchmark of support" that influenced the shape of the new package.

Kelly confirmed that last year's \$2 million and this year's \$2 million from CUNY's central budget are intimately linked. "The number is not a coincidence," he said. "We needed to not go backwards. The \$2 million that had been established through the contract formed the base, the floor for this new program."

The PSC also fought in Albany for State funding for graduate student support, as a matter of basic equity. "Tuition remission is just the norm around the country," noted Fabricant. "CUNY has been the singular exception. For example, SUNY gets about \$29 million from the State for graduate student support. CUNY gets nothing."

## PROTRACTED EFFORT

It was clear that to change this would require a protracted effort. "For the past three years, the PSC has requested graduate tuition remission in its state budget lobbying materials," said Bowen. "And we've made multiple trips to Albany, informing the Legislature about this issue." This consciousness-raising is critical, she explained: "The fact that CUNY does not get funding for graduate student support is not common knowledge."

In May, PSC activists raised this issue along with other budget issues at district meetings with state

legislators in their local offices. On June 3, the union organized a trip to Albany. "We had a packed bus – senior administrators from the Grad Center, faculty and students – and had over 30 appointments on this one issue," said Bowen. "It was unprecedented."

Mainardi and Egan, a full professor and a grad student who are both PSC members, were among the 50 or so people who made the trip. "One of the people we met with was my State Senator, Velmanette Montgomery," said Mainardi. "She said the issue was new for her, and her top concern in terms of CUNY was City Tech, since it's in her district. I told her I'm talking with City Tech right now because they need a GTF from my program – and she immediately got the connection."

Each group of grassroots lobbyists was armed with a count of the number of CUNY grad students in each legislator's district. "I had the impression that it made a real difference to tell some of the personal stories behind this issue," said Egan. "Several students talked about how many jobs they had to work, to pay tuition. And we were able to give a sense that CUNY students are doing interesting things, when people talked about what they're doing in grad school."

While legislators are beginning to support the PSC on this issue, a majority still have to be convinced. The PSC plans to continue working with legislators, and seek full State funding and parity with SUNY. "We have to continue our advocacy in Albany," Bowen said.

The heads of doctoral programs agree. While Kassir is delighted with CUNY's new plan, he noted that it will still leave too many students without support. "Even at the end of the five years, it still won't be like SUNY," he said. "There, anyone who does service for the university gets tuition remission."

For her part, Egan is taking the issue into the community. "I live up in Inwood," said Egan, a former Belle Zeller Scholar. "We had a neighborhood forum to discuss the domestic impact of the war in Iraq, and I brought some literature on tuition remission at CUNY. This is something that the Doctoral Student Council has discussed, that it's in part because of government spending on the war that there's not enough available for education." Egan said she spoke to many people that evening who were startled to learn that, unlike SUNY and other schools, CUNY does not get funds for graduate tuition support.

The continued lack of State support led both faculty and Graduate School administrators to express particular appreciation for 80th Street's decision to implement the new program in what Kelly called "a very tough budget year." Kelly added that support from college provosts and the UFS had been important to making the tuition remission plan a reality.

## RIGHT TRACK

"I think Chancellor Goldstein and Vice Chancellor Mirrer are on the right track," said Kassir. "CUNY is doing the right thing. Let's continue, and create the University we all want."

Along with the enthusiasm comes acknowledgement that the new plan is not perfect. Since it only covers a cost equivalent to in-state tuition, international students – who cannot qualify for residency – face a huge financial burden even with a fellowship, especially after the recent tuition increase. Kelly insisted that 80th Street has been responsive to

## Tuition remission for Ph.D. students is standard practice in the U.S.

international students' needs; he cited a \$200,000 grant to help cover the tuition increase for international grad students accepted before the tuition hike was passed, and a \$6,000 increase in the two-year stipends for Science Fellows.

Mainardi said some department heads at the colleges are concerned that the new program will give them less choice in which GTFs work on their campus; Kelly called cooperation with college departments a "crucial element" for the new plan's success. And with new students now given independent teaching responsibilities earlier in their graduate career, Mainardi noted that graduate programs will need to do more to prepare them.

"It's going to be rocky in the beginning, but in the end it's going to work," she said. "This is such an enormous change that you can't work it out all in advance."

# Meet the PSC Bargaining Team

With the start of a new academic year, bargaining for a new PSC contract is beginning to heat up. Clarion asked members of the PSC negotiating team for their thoughts on what lies ahead. The complete list of the PSC's contract demands, published in the May/June Clarion, is available online at [www.psc-cuny.org/ClarionMayJune03.pdf](http://www.psc-cuny.org/ClarionMayJune03.pdf)



**BARBARA BOWEN**  
PSC President, Chief Negotiator  
Associate Professor, English, Queens  
& Grad Center

In this round of bargaining, CUNY is at a crossroads: will the current "CUNY renaissance" be merely partial, or will management deepen and expand it by supporting the people who make the University work? Ads in the subway with our images are fine, but the union's demands map out a future for CUNY where renewal is profound and lasting. Healthcare is a primary issue; it's time to stop the erosion of Welfare Fund benefits and the shift of health costs onto our backs. For part-timers this is especially acute: can CUNY countenance employing thousands of part-timers with inadequate health coverage and poverty-level wages? At every level and rank there must be continued progress on salaries; meanwhile we seek to win the routine supports for academic life – sabbaticals, family leave, tuition waivers for our children. A renaissance is great, but let's ask management to put its money where its mouth is.



**STANLEY ARONOWITZ**  
PSC University-wide Officer  
Distinguished Professor, Sociology and Urban  
Education, Grad Center

Number one, in my view, is the problem that this University has made so many changes which have gone into effect without consultation with the employees represented by the union.

The union insisted on the right of the employees to bargain with the University administration over a range of University programs that impact on terms and conditions of employment. Initiating the School of Professional Studies, is one example. Then there is the issue of intellectual property – they want to share profits of patents and make intellectual property policy unilaterally on things like distance learning, without real negotiation with the union.

Also, we have to make some real advances in salaries, which is always important, and on issues of workload.



**JOHN HYLAND**  
PSC Treasurer  
Professor, Sociology, LaGuardia

There's a numbers part to contract negotiations, but there's also a qualitative part. They're distinct but they're not separate. The defense and the promotion of academic professionalism has to be a focus for these negotiations because the tendency is for management to erode those qualitative aspects. Unless we're careful there could be a deskilling in academic work. People tend to value their work as more than just a job. But morale is still relatively low. There's a sense that the qualitative aspects of academic life have been eroded. Their desire is to be full-fledged academics, intellectuals, but the difficulty is the heavy courseload and lack of research support. We've listened to our members in relation to that. We intend to make that one of the core issues of the negotiations just as we did last time. And we want salaries to reflect the value we put on our work.



**MICHAEL FABRICANT**  
PSC Vice President for Senior Colleges  
Professor and Executive Officer, Ph.D.  
Program in Social Welfare, Grad Center

A key issue is what I would call the sub-altern university – the shadow university – that is rapidly being developed. A secondary labor force – part-time faculty, continuing education, and so on – is being created in the University and that is a problem. The existence of those diminished salaries and benefits is a concern to every member of the University because that is the direction in which the university is headed.

The fiscal environment does not make our job easy. We must make the case that substantial investment in public higher education needs to be made because of the enormous disinvestments in the 70s and 80s and also because higher education is such a motor of today's economy. Finally, we must resist the concessionary environment and the major demands made against us. That will be a major area of struggle. We will need a substantial involvement from our membership.

## Contract talks get moving

**STEVE LONDON**  
PSC First Vice President  
Associate Professor, Political Science, Brooklyn

This round of bargaining will help determine which of two competing visions shapes the future of the University. The union's vision is reflected in its bargaining demands for professional working conditions, enhanced Welfare Fund benefits, and professional autonomy, while the University's demands are to corporatize the university, creating hierarchy and greater management control. That's what this



**ANNE FRIEDMAN**  
PSC Vice President for Community Colleges  
Professor of Developmental Skills, BMCC

The entire negotiating team is united around every one of our demands, but one that stands out for me is the need for a reduction in teaching hours workload, especially at the community colleges. This is the only way to enable faculty to meet the demands of doing the research, publishing and service to the department, college and university that are required for tenure and promotion. The provision we won last round for 12 hours of reassigned time for junior faculty was a major recognition of our research needs. In these negotiations, we seek to extend that to library and counseling faculty. And we also have to go beyond that, to guarantee that all faculty have a workload that enables professional life.

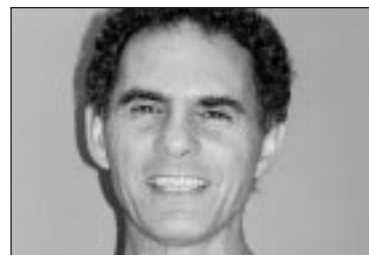


**JEAN WEISMAN**  
Chair, PSC Higher Education Officer Chapter  
Administrative Coordinator, CCNY Center for  
Worker Education

The next contract will be a step forward in the struggle for empowerment for HEOs at CUNY. In the last contract we achieved funding for professional development and established HEO labor-management committees. Now we are working for promotions, over-time pay and job security. Workload and job security are issues that affect everyone in the union, not just HEOs, so these issues are crucial in the next contract. Union members working together is the only way to win additional funding for higher education.



contract fight is about. With members' active involvement we will prevail and that will be good for the University, and good for the students and people of New York City.



**STEVE TRIMBOLI**  
PSC Cross-Campus Officer  
Senior College Laboratory Technician,  
Biological Sciences, Lehman

CUNY's position is that they basically want to turn the University into a business. Our main goal is to enhance the academic environment and substantially improve the terms and conditions of employment for our members. And to strengthen our ability to enforce the contract – to defend and protect all the employees we represent.



**IRIS DeLUTRO**  
PSC Vice President, Cross Campus Units  
Queens College Labor Education and  
Advancement Program

I am honored and humbled to be a member of the contract negotiation team. This is where we protect our right to be treated with dignity and respect at our job sites and defend professional autonomy in the work process. This is where we fight for promotions for the non-promotional HEO series titles, which is a priority for hundreds of our members. This is where we fight for equity for the contingent labor of the University – such as and adjuncts and part-time CLTs – and this is where we address the problem of the abuse of HEO substitute lines.

This team is committed to fighting for you. We are ready for the challenge! Are you committed to fight for you? We will need you during these negotiations. Please be prepared to join us in our struggle to deliver the best possible contract for all of us.



**CECELIA McCALL**  
PSC Secretary  
Associate Professor, English, Baruch

All of the city municipal unions should stand strong against Bloomberg's attempts to weaken the municipal labor force through demands for increased "productivity" and unwillingness to pay labor what they're worth for all the work they put in.

As for the PSC, our demands are in line with what the city needs for a good strong public university.



**MARCIA NEWFIELD**  
PSC Vice President for Part-Time Personnel  
Adjunct Lecturer, English, BMCC

Part-timers have got to have job security and a recognition of seniority, as well as further movement towards salary and benefits parity with full-timers.

People work 15-20 years, pouring their hearts out, then management can bump them off with impunity. We've become these perma-temps – and if that's not corporatization of the University, I don't know what is.

Another priority for this round of bargaining is resisting the University's attempts to abrogate faculty decision-making by taking titles and functions away from us and carving the workplace into so many different pieces. This is an insidious attack on our strength as workers.



**ANDREW McINERNEY**  
PSC Community College Officer  
Associate Professor, Mathematics and  
Computer Science, Bronx

I am looking forward to finding ways to broaden membership participation in the negotiations process to win the best contract that we deserve. While we have a great team of negotiators, I believe that it will be the members' determination to exert pressure that will be decisive in winning a decent contract. We'll win the contract that the members are willing to fight for.

# Class size is cut at John Jay

By PETER HOGNESS

Class sizes are starting to be reduced at John Jay College this Fall, as the result of a resolution passed by the school's governance body last spring.

The resolution was approved by the John Jay (JJ) College Council on April 2, over the objections of college administration. It was proposed at the initiative of the school's department chairs and Faculty Senate, with the support of the PSC chapter.

"Freshman-level classes had been capped at 45 but now are limited to 40," said Harold Sullivan, chair of the political science department and head of JJ's council of department chairs. "The new limit was supposed to be 36, but we are prepared to be flexible because the resolution was just passed last spring." Sophomore level core English and history classes have dropped from 44 to 38.

"At John Jay class size has been getting worse for a number of years," PSC Chapter Chair Jim Cohen told *Clarion*. "An introductory class often requires attention to writing or to

## JJ College Council moves to lower limits

students with particular needs. To have 44 or 45 students often undermines meeting those needs."

Too many people in a classroom can also mean serious health and safety problems, from air quality to fire safety. "Overcrowding contributes to very difficult conditions," said Cohen. "You often have students who are unable to pay attention, because they're breathing stale

air in an unventilated classroom that's 85 degrees."

During final exams last December, measurements by chapter members Francis Sheehan and Jerry Markowitz joined PSC Health and Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum found excess CO<sup>2</sup> in classrooms in JJ's North Hall. "Particularly when combined with overheating, as was the case at John Jay last winter, excess CO<sup>2</sup> really leads to difficulty in concentration," Greenbaum said.

"We are tremendously overcrowded," said Karen Kaplowitz, president of JJ's Faculty Senate and a member of the PSC chapter's health and safe-

ty committee. "We have the lowest amount of space per FTE student within CUNY, only 47 square feet per FTE. We had 12,500 students last year, in two buildings that are supposed to have about half that many."

### FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety is an even more serious problem. Kaplowitz told *Clarion* that several fire safety problems in JJ's North Hall were identified in a report to college administration in the Spring by the Dormitory Authority of the State of NY (DASNY), which is responsible for construction and renovation work at CUNY.

Extensive renovations are already underway, both to create fire-resistant "safe areas" and to improve emergency exit routes. "The administration is taking it very seriously," Kaplowitz said, but she noted that reducing overcrowding had to be part of the solution. (The class size resolution also offers incentives for faculty and students to teach or take classes at off-peak times.)

The resolution on class size was discussed in February and March by

the college's Council of Chairs and Faculty Senate, and then brought to JJ's primary governing body, the College Council, where it passed overwhelmingly in April.

"It passed over the objections of the administration," Sullivan said. "The president asserted that the College Council didn't have the right to set policy on class size, but we basically won on that question." After the resolution was passed, JJ administration asked CUNY central administration to nullify it – but 80th Street declined to do so.

"There were consultations with the central office regarding the legal issues involved," confirmed JJ Provost Basil Wilson. He said 80th Street had not ruled on the resolution. "Who is responsible for determining class size, I don't think that's a resolved issue."

Faculty leaders disagreed. "The College Council is the democratically elected legislative body of this College," said Cohen. "We expect the administration to respect democratic process and established college policy."

Soon after the resolution passed, "there was a series of meetings between the administration and faculty leadership and they found some common ground," explained Ned Benton, a professor of public management and the department chair who first proposed the resolution. He characterized the JJ administration's stance towards the Council's authority as one of "creative ambiguity."

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Wilson told *Clarion*, "Class size is a major issue in every university because it has enormous financial implications. One cannot approach class size in a sentimental way." In the end, he said, "I think we came out with a fairly adroit position, in the sense that the College Council ruled a certain way but it did not detract from the authority of the president."

The resolution lists maximum numbers for different types of classes, ranging from 16 to 36. These limits may be amended by vote of the College Budget Committee, it states, and they are "subject to a final determination by the president based on the college's financial ability." But any such changes require a series of consultations with both the College Budget Committee and the JJ Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

"We've all committed to continue to seek common ground," said Benton, "and I believe we'll continue to make progress in this way."

# BMCC and 9/11 fallout

By PETER HOGNESS

Diane Simmons was teaching in Fiterman Hall when the first plane hit. After she evacuated her class from the building and told them to head north, she fell in behind three clerical workers who had been in one of the towers. "Their supervisor had instructed them not to leave," Simmons recalled, "but they left anyway. They kept looking back at the burning towers." Simmons did not. "Once I was walking, I didn't look back. I'm really glad I didn't see people jumping."

With the college closed for three weeks, BMCC's faculty, staff and students connected by phone and e-mail. "It was the first time I'd taught an online course," says Lisa Rose, an associate professor of social science. "The students used that medium to connect right away, and the class became a really meaningful support group." Once the college reopened, she says, "Going to work was like walking through a war zone. With all the police barricades, people in uniform, no cars...it was very stressful."

### TERRIBLE AIR

"The air was terrible," says Rebecca Weiner, a lecturer in English. "I had burning eyes, throat problems. It was so awful that at first I felt I couldn't go to class." When she

## Questions on long-term effects

returned to her seventh-floor office, she found that the window had been open the whole time the college was closed. "It was filthy," she recalls. "They came in and vacuumed, but you're supposed to use the HEPA vacuum, which was never done."

Weiner says she had trouble breathing during the Fall semester, and her doctor told her she had reduced lung capacity. Those with pre-existing respiratory problems were most vulnerable to short-term effects of the polluted air: Weiner, Rose and Simmons all had students who dropped out because the air aggravated their asthma.

Weiner tells *Clarion*, "It's the long-run effects that I'm most concerned about," and assistant professor of social science Ron Hayduk agrees. "No one knows what the long-term effects will be," he says. "There are unstudied compounds that people have inhaled, and we don't know the consequences." PSC Health and Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum urges PSC members at BMCC and elsewhere to sign up for the NYC Health Department's WTC

Health Registry, open to those who were working or living below Canal Street on Sept. 11, by phoning (866) NYC-WTCR. The registry aims to monitor long-term health issues.

Hayduk says he was glad to know that the PSC insisted on having an independent testing firm conduct its own analysis, and that the union had pressed hard for the interior of BMCC's ventilation system to be cleaned after tests found elevated lead levels at the air intakes.

"The levels at the intakes were 100 times the acceptable levels for windowsills," Greenbaum says. "It took nine months to get them to test, and nine months to get it cleaned. It shouldn't have taken so much prodding, and BMCC shouldn't have had to beg for the money." The cleaning was completed last April.

In August the EPA's Inspector General (IG), a nonpartisan watchdog within the agency, issued a report that sharply criticized the EPA for bowing to White House political pressure and removing health warnings from post-9/11 press releases. EPA technical staff had

### The EPA caved in to pressure from the White House.



Lorraine Cohen, prof. of social science at LaGuardia CC, at a candlelight vigil at Ground Zero organized by September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows. At right is her husband, Michael Gold, who attended with a group from Veterans for Peace.

called for a specific caution about effects of fine dust particles on those with particular vulnerabilities (such as asthma), but this was vetoed by the White House – as was advice to homeowners to hire professional cleaners. The White House also pressed for "blanket reassurances" not supported by the evidence, the IG wrote, such as the statement that exposure to the level of asbestos in WTC dust "is unlikely to cause significant health effects."

"I just had kind of a sick feeling at the level of dishonesty and misinformation," says Rose. "I had thought people were being cynical when they said things were worse than the government was letting on." Hayduk supports calls for an in-

vestigation of the White House role: "Someone should be held culpable for this level of heavy-handed suppression and misrepresentation."

The acting head of the EPA, Marianne Lamont Horinko, attacked the IG's report. "It's almost like an academic look at an average emergency," she said, "and 9/11 wasn't academic or average."

"Most academics try to be honest, thorough and compassionate," responded Marcia Newfield, PSC VP for Part-Time Affairs and an adjunct in the BMCC English department for many years. "We consider the welfare of our students and the integrity of our research to be our Hippocratic Oath. It's too bad Ms. Horinko has no such standards."

# The PSC at Labor Day 2003

The PSC turned out in full force for the 2003 Labor Day Parade on September 6, in support of the theme, "Right to Organize, Right to Strike." "We see the Labor Day Parade as a kick-off for a year of intense union activity in the face of unfavorable economic conditions and antagonistic political forces," said PSC Treasurer John Hyland.

Parade marchers made clear that they think New York State's Taylor Law, which prohibits strikes, unfairly limits the rights of workers. A New York State AFL-CIO task force on the Taylor Law has called for wide-ranging reforms, including: the permanent right to agency shop fees, punitive punishments for abusive employers, and an effective remedy when management refuses to bargain in good faith.



All photos: Gary Schoichet, except top left: Peter Hogness

## Immigrant workers freedom ride

By TOMIO GERON

### Hits NYC October 4

Thousands of people will converge on New York City on October 4 for an historic event.

The Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (IWFR), modeled on the 1960s Freedom Rides in the South for civil rights, will finish its national journey when it rolls into New York City in October. Caravans of buses are traveling cross-country from ten US cities, stopping in dozens of towns along the way to push for immigration reform.

The nationwide protest will culminate in a mass rally and festival in Queens at Flushing Meadows Park, from 11 am - 3 pm on October 4. With music, celebrities and cultural events, the giant demonstration will also be a celebration of the diversity of Queens, NYC and the nation.

"Immigrant workers, living and paying taxes in the United States, deserve the rights to legalize their status, to have a clear road to citizenship, to reunify their families, to have a voice on the job without regard to legal status, and to enjoy full protection of their civil rights and civil liberties," coalition organizers declared.

Over 850 organizations are backing the Freedom Ride and its demands, including the AFL-CIO and national unions such as SEIU, HERE and the Laborers; religious groups such as Catholic Charities, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hindu Temple Society of North America; and a staggering range of community organizations, from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society to Hondureños Unidos of North and South Carolina, from the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task Force to the National Coalition for Haitian Rights.

#### IMMIGRATION LAWS

"The immigration laws are outdated. They need to be fixed," said Maria Elena Durazo, national coordinator of IWFR, at a recent City Hall press conference.

"Why do hundreds of thousands who play by the rules have to be separated from their families?" said Brian McLaughlin, Chair of the New

York City Central Labor Council and the New York City chair of the IWFR.

Organizers hope that the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride will be a major catalyst for changes in immigration policy, just as the Freedom Rides of the 1960s were for civil rights. They hope to have an impact on the 2004 presidential election and raise the issue of the estimated eight million undocumented immigrants in

the U.S.

The PSC Solidarity Committee is asking CUNY faculty to find ways to discuss the Freedom Ride with students and encourage them to get involved. (If you would like a representative from Jobs with Justice to come to your campus, or want more information, e-mail Penny Lewis at pennywilhelmina@hotmail.com.) The union is also reaching out to students at campuses in Queens in particular - LaGuardia, Queens, Queensborough and York - through



student clubs and other groups to mobilize for the rally.

"We work for the taxpayers," said PSC Solidarity Committee Co-Chair Jim Perlstein, "Increasingly, they are recent immigrants or the children of recent immigrants - as are CUNY students. For the PSC to support the rights of immigrant workers is simply to support the people who employ us."

#### RALLIES

Rallies leading up to the final event are planned throughout the city. These include a march across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall on

September 24 at 11 am, and a Manhattan march from Washington Heights to Harlem on September 27 at 1 pm. (For more information, go to [www.iwfr.org](http://www.iwfr.org).)

New York union and immigrant rights activists are using the mobilization to push for two City Council bills that remove barriers to immigrants' access to City services. Intro. 326 - dubbed the "Access Without Fear Bill" - will establish a general confidentiality policy for City agencies, so that individuals seeking city services will not have to provide information (such as immigration status) not required by federal law. The bill will also make it easier for immigrants to report crimes, said Council member Hiram Monserrate, a former police officer who is the bill's main sponsor.

Intro 38A would require translation of benefits materials at City agencies into Arabic, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian and Spanish.

According to Margie McHugh, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition, many other U.S. cities are doing even more than these bills propose to ensure access to services for immigrants. "It's absolutely outrageous and unfair that we have policies that lag behind the rest of the country," she said.

The Council is currently negotiating with Mayor Michael Bloomberg over the details of the two bills.

The reverse is a pull-out poster.

# Labor Goes to the Movies

The PSC is proud to announce the third year of its film series. The series is designed as a forum for discussion of contemporary issues facing labor and the union movement and to strengthen ties across the labor movement in New York City. Each screening will feature a PSC member and special guests—including outside academics, filmmakers, union activists and other workers.



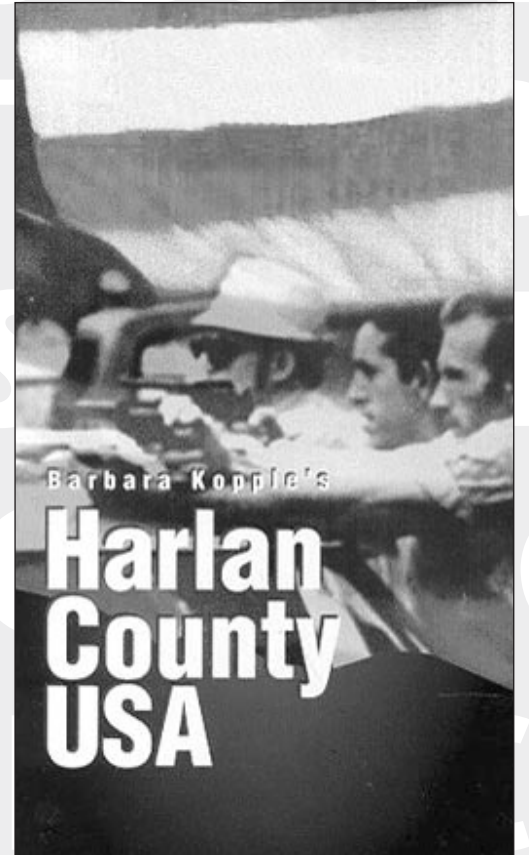
## SEPT. 12 – ALIEN (Ridley Scott, 1979)

A buffed Sigourney Weaver works for a commercial mining operation in outer space. Her spaceship responds to an unidentified signal and discovers signs of life. The alien turns out to be considerably less cuddly than E.T., but Weaver also must contend with a contract that rigidly prioritizes the “scientific” goal of the mission over the health and safety, and the very existence, of the workers/crew. A volatile mélange of gender politics, critical science and contract labor.



## OCT. 17 – BATTLE OF ALGIERS (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1965)

Algerian rebels fight for independence from French rule in this gritty and remarkably realistic documentary-style film. The guerillas expand their assault into the casbah, while the French attempt to crush the growing movement. Amateur actors as well as pioneering hand-held camera scenes make war more real for some. There aren't simple heroes and bad guys; the colonizers are smartly portrayed and the rebels use some of the master's tools. The contemporary resonance of the story of a major imperial power fighting to hang onto its receding empire in the Middle East should not be missed.



## NOV. 14 – HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A. (Barbara Kopple, 1976)

How did she make this film? Kopple's Harlan County, U.S.A. ranks as one of the most political and dynamic films produced in the United States. This documentary about labor struggle and relations, a chronicle of striking miners from rural Kentucky, includes incendiary shots of violence and confrontation as well as moments of solidarity and heroism. You will be drawn into a forgotten, working-class part of America, and experience revealing and contrasting sequences of stockholders' meetings, police lines and strikebreakers in action.



## JAN. 24 (1:00 PM) – 1900 (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1976)

What better way to spend a winter afternoon (and evening!) than watching Bertolucci's tragic epic? 1900 stars Gerard Depardieu and Robert DeNiro as childhood friends, peasant and landlord born on the same day in 1900, and raised as near-brothers on opposite sides of Italy's class struggle. This materialist film traces the modern history of Italy as the two friends live out their respective destinies, which are always, as Bertolucci declared in his earlier masterpiece, “before the revolution.” The superb international cast, extraordinary cinematography, and political sweep distinguish 1900 from other historical sagas. Considered a masterpiece by some, a flawed overreach by others, 1900 is one of the great films of the 20th century.

**A special Saturday screening.**



# A Professional Staff Congress Film Series 2003-2004



## DEC. 12 – MODERN TIMES

(Charlie Chaplin, 1936)

While a consistent supporter of progressive causes, Chaplin's brilliance rested on his own presentation of self as outsider, marked by gait, attire, size in his image, by solitude in his personal and professional aspirations in his stories. Even in this corrosive and penetrating critique of mass production, Chaplin's alienation finds no surcease in group solidarity, but no one has excelled him in indicting the violence attending the removal of creativity from the workplace. His own work, of course, represented the antithesis of industrial filmmaking.

## MAR. 12 – PORTRAIT OF TERESA [RETRATO DE TERESA]

(Pastor Vega, 1979)

Vega's daring film examines the sexism of the triple shift of Cuban women in the years following the revolution. Teresa is a textile worker, mother and wife, and (apropos our film series) a participant in her factory's cultural program. Putting in long hours at work and at dance rehearsals, Teresa comes home to a husband expecting her full-time attention to traditional domestic duties and unquestioned acceptance of traditional masculine prerogatives. In addition, the film broaches the persistence of class difference in revolutionary Cuba. This volatile film unleashed great controversy where it was released.



## FEB. 20 – FINALLY GOT THE NEWS

(League of Revolutionary Black Workers, 1970)

A documentary produced in 1970 by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers recounts the actions of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). Following the Detroit uprising of 1967, radical black activists and autoworkers began protesting racist conditions at Chrysler's Dodge factory that assigned them the most dangerous and onerous work and denied them access to more desirable jobs. After a wildcat strike led by DRUM in May 1968, Revolutionary Union Movements spread to other plants and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers was formed to serve as a central organization to coordinate the radical union organizing.



**BLUE COLLAR**

RICHARD PRYOR • HARVEY KEITEL • YAPHET KOTTO  
Starring in 'BLUE COLLAR' • Co-Starring CLIFF DAYOUNIS • Written by PAUL SCHRADER & LEONARD SCHRADER  
Executive Producer ROBIN FRENCH • Produced by DON GUST • Directed by PAUL SCHRADER  
BOB BYRNE • A EAT Production • A JEROME BLANK • TECHNOLOGY

## APRIL 23 – BLUE COLLAR

(Paul Schrader, 1978)

Shot in a Detroit factory when they were still churning out Checker cabs, the film traces the fate of three workers who rob their union. Though the robbery is a disaster, the thieves do make off with the cooked books of the union. The union pursues the burglars with stunning unscrupulousness as the FBI seeks informers to rat on the union. While the anti-union politics of the film are in many ways deplorable, the film demonstrates the explosiveness of racial tensions among the three friends (Richard Pryor, Yaphet Kotto and Harvey Keitel) when cynically manipulated by the union.

**CUNY  
FILMS**

## MAY 14 – CUNY FILMS

A selection of films made by PSC members, some of whom will be present.

All screenings take place at  
**CCNY Center for Worker Education**  
99 Hudson Street, Manhattan  
6 PM (unless indicated)  
\$2 suggested donation

Space is limited!  
Please come early.

The reverse is a pull-out poster.



Photos far right top and bottom and inset: Gary Schoichet; all others Peter Hogness



**THIS PAGE** clockwise from top left: Margaret Cuonzo, assistant professor of philosophy at Brooklyn's LIU campus; 2 PSC members; Vinny Tirelli, Tony Gronowicz, Diane Menna and Shirley Rausher represent a strong adjunct contingent; EC member Arthurine DeSola; Miriam Thompson and Iris DeLutro of Queens College and PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall and DeLutro's mother Ada De Jesus, at center; a future PSC member.

**OPPOSITE PAGE** from left: Jane Young and Phil Eggers of BMCC; Nkechi Agwu, associate professor of math at BMCC, with son, Ngozi; Debbie Carreras, a CUNY supporter; Lloyd Carr of City Tech; PSC President Barbara Bowen.

## Albany update

# Transit benefit for CUNY

By EILEEN MORAN  
Queens (retired)

PSC pressure in Albany paid off this summer, when a bill allowing CUNY employees to take pre-tax deductions for transit benefits passed the Legislature. Meanwhile, bills on unemployment insurance for part-time faculty were still being considered.

The transit legislation, signed in August, authorizes CUNY to offer a transit fringe benefit program that allows employees to use up to \$100 per month of pre-tax dollars to pay for mass transit. The money deducted from your pay, up to a maximum of \$1200 per year, is exempt from federal, state and local income taxes (including Social Security and Medicare taxes). Thus, your taxes will be reduced and the savings are about 20-30% of the amount you choose to have deducted.

"This is long overdue," said PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall. "Our members lobbied hard for it, both in Albany and locally." A problem in State law had to be rectified before CUNY employees could be included, McCall explained, and she noted

that Assembly Higher Education Committee Chair Ron Canestrari had helped to push the bill through.

"The persistence of the PSC pays off," commented Jay Appelman, chapter chair at Queensborough and a regular Albany lobbyist.

The union is seeking a meeting with CUNY administration to discuss how the transit benefit will be structured. The City of New York currently offers its employees MetroCards for use on TA buses and subways, paid for with the deductions.

Since the Governor only signed this legislation in the middle of August it will take a while for CUNY administration to set up the payroll deduction system. Once more is known about implementation, details will be posted on the PSC Web site ([www.psc-cuny.org](http://www.psc-cuny.org)).

### Unemployment insurance for part-time faculty

The Senate and Assembly Labor Committees will be considering bills (A 8190 in the Assembly & S 5047 in the Senate) that would enable part-time instructional faculty who do

not teach in the summer to collect unemployment insurance. Current law is inadequate because those who receive letters that indicate CUNY's "intention" to employ them in the next semester are usually considered to have "reasonable assurance" of employment and thus are deemed ineligible for unemployment insurance during the intervening period. But as Marcia Newfield, PSC Vice-President for Part-Time Personnel, notes, "Adjuncts who receive these 'offers' are frequently not given courses to teach for a variety of reasons, including budget cuts by CUNY in response to underfunding by the State."

Diane Menna, an adjunct at Queens College and PSC Officer for Part-Time Personnel, urges members "to call, e-mail and better yet to visit your state representatives this Fall" to ensure that they support expanding unemployment insurance to cover part-time faculty. District visits are being organized; contact Eileen Moran ([eyedon@earthlink.net](mailto:eyedon@earthlink.net) or 718-631-3201) if you are willing to meet with your legislator at the neighborhood district office.

## LABOR IN BRIEF

### LIU faculty win contract

As *Clarion* went to press, faculty at Long Island University's Brooklyn campus settled their six-day strike, winning a contract with gains in salary and benefits and reductions in workload. Faculty at LIU's C.W. Post campus, who are in a separate local, remained on strike.

The workload for full-time faculty will be capped at three courses per semester, down from a maximum of four, starting next year. Full-timers will get a 2% salary increase the first year, followed by 4% in each of the next two years. Part-time faculty will receive a 4% increase each year. LIU refused to provide increased health benefits or a seniority system for part-time faculty, but did agree to pay into a new trust fund for adjunct benefits. LIU's Brooklyn faculty voted 178-33 in favor of the contract on September 12.

### Bush blocked in OT?

The US Senate voted on September 10 to block new overtime rules issued by the Bush administration that could end overtime pay for millions of workers. Approved by a 54-45 vote, the measure would

block the Labor Department's proposed expansion of exemptions to overtime pay under the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act. The Act established the 40-hour work week and time-and-a-half pay for time worked over 40 hours. However, last July the House voted 213-210 to support the rules, which will take effect if Congress does not vote to stop them.

The Bush proposals – which would not change provisions in union contracts – would exempt many workers from overtime through job reclassification. The Economic Policy Institute says that more than 8 million workers could lose the right to overtime pay.

### Verizon settlement

Verizon workers reached an agreement on a five-year contract in early September. Workers maintained job security guarantees for current employees, but these provisions will not cover the company's new hires. Workers agreed to a one-time payment of 3% in the first year with no increase in base pay, plus 2% salary increases in each of the next four years. The new contract will extend the provision that unionized workers or retirees not pay premiums for health coverage, though spouses of some workers will now have to pay a premium.

# New life insurance program

By TOMIO GERON

The PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund is changing to a new term life insurance program offered through the PSC's state affiliate, NYSUT. Members who have had term life insurance through the Fund must decide by **October 15** whether they want to transfer their current term life benefit. Employees hired on or after July 1, 2003, are being offered the new plan when they are hired.

Those who have been receiving a term life insurance benefit may transfer their current coverage to the NYSUT plan. In a very valuable offer to current WF members, NYSUT has agreed to a one-time transfer of current term life coverage without asking any medical

## October 15 deadline

questions. The transfer offer with no medical underwriting requirement is for the current basic "free" coverage (the value of which declines

### YOUR BENEFITS

from \$50,000 at age 40 to \$5,000 at age 65) and up to \$100,000 of their optional contributory coverage. Additional amounts that a member wants to transfer or purchase, up to a total of \$500,000, are subject to medical underwriting. Members will be responsible for paying premiums (at very competitive rates) on their total term life coverage.

The change in plans was prompted by a need to save money in the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund because of the increasing cost of prescription drugs and other benefits. "Not only will the Fund save \$600,000 annually, but for the vast majority of our membership these changes are a benefit enhancement," said Steve London, PSC First Vice President and WF Executive Officer.

### NEW RULES

Unlike the old program, which was based on employment status, the new plan allows members to continue life insurance coverage even after they retire or leave their jobs at CUNY.

New Welfare Fund members (joining the payroll on or after July 1, 2003) will now be offered a free one-year \$50,000 term life insurance policy with no medical underwriting required. After the first year this plan can be renewed, with the premium paid by the member. Up to \$450,000 of additional coverage may be purchased at competitive rates by the member and dependents. Newly hired adjuncts and continuing education teachers who establish eligibility (which requires being on the payroll for three consecutive pay periods) will receive this free one-year policy. If part-timers leave CUNY employment before the end of the year, they will continue to receive the free plan for one full year and may renew their policy by paying premiums and joining the PSC as associate members.

For both current Welfare Fund members and new hires, the NYSUT Term Life plan is age-based. The

amount of term life insurance is stepped down by half at age 65 and ends at age 70. However, members may transfer to the NYSUT Senior Term Life program at age 65 or after. (You cannot have both Term Life and Senior Life concurrently.) NYSUT Senior Life provides up to \$30,000 of term life insurance until age 70 and then decreases until it ends at age 85.

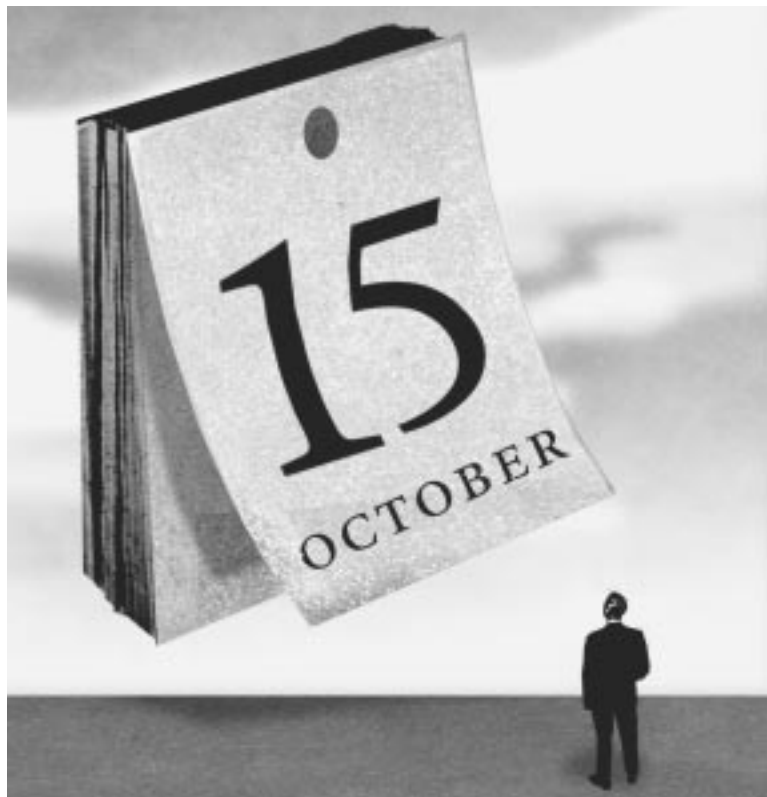
For current WF members, the Fund has negotiated special arrangements with NYSUT to deal with the transition. Those aged 65 to 69 who transfer to the standard NYSUT plan can continue the full amount of their transferred coverage up to age 70, and can then apply for NYSUT Senior Life. Those over 70 have a choice of going into NYSUT Senior Life (which they can continue regardless of employment status), or keeping all or part of their transferred amount until they retire. Both of these groups are exempt from the step-down provisions of the regular term life plan.

### Coverage that can continue after retirement

### DEADLINES

For WF members hired before July 1, 2003, the old life insurance plan ends at midnight on October 31, 2003 and the new plan takes effect November 1, 2003. For members transferring coverage from the old plan, enrollment in the new plan must be completed by October 15, 2003. After that date, you will lose the opportunity to transfer your current basic and optional coverage without answering any medical questions.

For further information on the changes, call the administrator of the benefit, Marsh Affinity Group Services, at (888) 38-NYSUT [386-9788]. Or call the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund at 212-354-5230.



Brian Stauffer

# Library cards for CUNY's retirees

By CLARION STAFF

Retirees welcomed a new provision in the current PSC contract that guarantees them access to CUNY libraries. It is something that should not be difficult for CUNY to provide, but actually getting your hands on a CUNY college library card has not always been simple.

The PSC pressed for a standard university-wide procedure for issuing the cards, but CUNY management has insisted on letting each campus handle it separately. The result is that some campuses have made getting the card a snap, while others require you to jump through a couple of administrative hoops.

Here's how to make sure that you get your card:

## How to get one for yourself

- Get a letter from your department or office signed by a chair or supervisor, verifying that you were employed there and that you have retired.

- Call your college's library and ID office to find out if the letter from the chair/supervisor is sufficient to get your library card. At some colleges, the letter will be enough. But at others, you will have to send the chair/supervisor letter to the college president's office (retaining a copy for yourself), and request a letter from the president authorizing a standard picture ID card with barcode. (This serves as the library card.)

- Next, call your college's ID card office to find out what hours it is open. When you go there, make sure

### YOUR RIGHTS

to bring your chair/supervisor's letter, the president's letter (if needed), a picture ID (such as driver's license or passport), and your most recent picture ID from the college, if you have one.

- Send a letter to the college's chief librarian to inform them of your intent to get library privileges, and request that any necessary adjustments to the library's computers

be made to allow you to borrow books. Ask for written acknowledgement that this has occurred.

The ID/library card will most likely be sent to you by mail. When you go to the ID card office, ask them when and how you will receive your card.

You're set! The first time you use the card for borrowing privileges, bring the acknowledgement letter from the chief librarian with you, just in case.

Renewals of your ID/library card should follow college rules, such as procedures for getting an annual sticker. You should check with your former department or office about renewal. The college may periodically request a retiree to exchange the old card for a new one.

## CALENDAR

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 / 5:30 pm:** PSC War & Peace Committee meeting. At the PSC office, 25 W. 43rd Street. For more information, contact Nancy Romer at 212-354-1252.

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1 / 11 am – 2 pm:** McCarthyism at Queens College Revisited: A Symposium. PSC Pres. Barbara Bowen, QC English; Ellen Schrecker, Yeshiva History; Alice Kessler-Harris, chair of Columbia History; Bert Silverman, QC Class of '53 and Prof. of Economics Emeritus, Hofstra. Faculty and students from the 1950s will be present and invited to speak. At Rosenthal Auditorium, Queens College. Also an exhibition on McCarthyism in the Rosenthal Library.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4 / 11 am – 3 pm:** The national Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride ends with a giant rally and festival in Queens at Flushing Meadows Park, with plenty of music and other cultural action (see p. 6). For information on PSC organizing for this event, e-mail Penny Lewis at pennywilhelmina@hotmail.com; other info on the Freedom Ride is available at www.iwfr.org.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9:** Solidarity Committee meeting. At the PSC office, 25 W. 43rd St. Call 212-354-1252 for more information.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10:** This is the last day to send in voter registration forms in order to vote in the November elections. Registration forms are available at post offices and many other government offices, or by calling (866)VOTE-NYC. You can also download forms at www.vote.nyc.ny.us.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10 / 3-5 pm:** Juan Gonzalez, NY Daily News columnist, will talk about the environmental effects of 9/11. At John Jay, 899 Tenth Ave., Room 610T.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18 / 9:30-12:30 pm:** PSC International Committee meeting. For location or other info, e-mail Tony O'Brien at ajobrien@bway.net.

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22:** TIAA-CREF representative David Stetch will be at the PSC office to discuss asset allocations, advantages of a tax deferred annuity, having enough to retire and your options to receive your TIAA-CREF retirement income. Call Linda Slifkin at the PSC office to schedule an appointment: 212-354-1252.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23 / 6 pm:** Opening reception for "Challenges to Free Speech & Academic Freedom, 1931-1942." Exhibit documents the first attempts to organize faculty and staff at City College. Describes the efforts of Teachers Union Local 5 and later College Teachers Union Local 537 (both AFT), both targeted by the Rapp-Coudert Committee. At CCNY's Morris Raphael Cohen Library.

# Hostos health concerns

By TOMIO GERON

"I noticed that whenever I came here I didn't feel right," said Carmen Alustiza-Mondesire, a counselor at Hostos Community College for three years. "I have to wash my eyes constantly."

Alustiza-Mondesire, who works in the D (Savoy) Building at Hostos, noticed that irritation of the eyes, allergies and sickness were not uncommon in her building. "I noticed other people with very, very bad allergies," she said. "They'd say the same thing: 'When I'm out of school I feel fine.'"

So she notified administrators at Hostos in writing, with digital pictures, in December 2002. When that didn't result in any changes, she notified Norma Peña de Llorenz, PSC Chapter Chair at Hostos.

"I documented what most people just complain about," said Alustiza-Mondesire. What she documented was a serious air circulation problem – where some areas get no air while some are freezing cold – plus unbelievably dirty rugs in high-traffic areas, bathrooms routinely out of order, dangerous stairways and some areas that seemed to have never been cleaned.

Peña de Llorenz had her own concerns about the building she works in, the 500 Building, which suffers from air circulation problems and broken elevators.

After Peña de Llorenz notified Hostos management that PSC Health and Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum would be coming for a

## "When I'm out of school I feel fine"

walk-through inspection in May, "for the first time in months they brought in cleaning crews to mop the floors and clean," Peña de Llorenz told *Clarion*.

### HEALTH & SAFETY

But the sudden clean-up left many areas untouched. "They were doing a little cover-up, cosmetic things," said Peña de Llorenz. "But nothing really changed." And Greenbaum was shocked by what she saw.

"I've never seen long strands of dust coiled up, hanging from the ceiling," said Greenbaum. "They

looked like a magic forest of dust coils." She told *Clarion* that the dust and lack of proper building maintenance could lead to significant health effects. "Certainly people with prior allergic

or breathing deficiencies or immune deficiencies are going to have difficulties in an environment with that much visible dust," she said. "There was filth at a level I've never seen. Mice droppings and fleas in the carpet, on desks and chairs."

Hostos President Dolores Fernandez acknowledged the rodent problem, and says that management is responding. "They show up in my office as well," she said. "We are on top of it and we are trying to address it."

But when the Hostos chapter had another walk-through in July, they did not see any substantive changes. "Faculty and staff are upset –

they're concerned about their health," said Peña de Llorenz. "They put in a lot of work at Hostos, always more work than they have to. When things like this are not fixed, people feel the administration is not acknowledging their loyalty to the college and is treating them like second-class citizens." And they are demanding more respect.

Greenbaum said that the buildings need a process called "air balancing." She said the college "has to run series of tests through the ducts and repeat them under different conditions to see that the air flow and the temperature are similar in different areas."

She and Peña de Llorenz have provided management with documentation of a range of problems, and Peña

de Llorenz told *Clarion* the chapter will pursue unresolved problems in labor-management meetings with Hostos administration.

Alustiza-Mondesire reports that some of the stairs in her building have recently been fixed. "That's a good sign," she said.

This fall, said Peña de Llorenz, "We will have a meeting of the membership to talk about health and safety." Halima Toure, a lecturer in the language and cognition department, has started a PSC health support group on campus to discuss medical issues, many of which can be affected by workplace conditions.

"Members are very informed at Hostos," said Greenbaum. "They have been trying to do things about this for years. I believe the union, faculty and staff can really get this turned around in the Fall, with the active voice of so many members."

**Some areas seemed to never have been cleaned.**



Marcia Newfield (left), PSC vice president for part time personnel, joined Long Island University faculty, who went on strike in early September for higher pay and benefits and lower workload. See Labor in Brief, p. 7.

# Health care spending account

By CLARISSA GILBERT WEISS

If you face large out-of-pocket medical expenses, a federal program called the Health Care Flexible Spending Account (HCFSA) can provide you with substantial savings – and now is the time to think about signing up.

Through an HCFSA, employees can pay for eligible medical and dental expenses not covered by insurance with pre-tax dollars. The program, available to CUNY instructional staff through the City of New York, allows you to put aside between \$260 and \$5,000 for you, your spouse or eligible dependents. At *Clarion* press time, the date for the end of this year's enrollment period was not set; last year it ended in mid-November.

By reducing your gross salary for federal and Social Security tax pur-

## Sign up now to save in 2004

poses, you lower your tax bill. Someone earning \$50,000 a year who sets aside the maximum might save \$1000 to \$1500, depending on tax filing details. An HCFSA can also help you to plan for anticipated expenses.

### EXPENSES

An HCFSA can be used to pay for deductibles, co-insurance and out-of-pocket costs for medical, dental, vision and hearing expenses. Physicals, psychologist's fees, braces, prescription drugs, prescription glasses and contact lenses are all eligible.

"I think it's a fabulous program," said Nancy Romer, professor of psychology at Brooklyn College, who used the program for expenses from surgery and related treatments. "If you have a serious medical condition

or know you're facing surgery that will not be fully covered by insurance, it's worth it to plan ahead," she said.

To use the program, first estimate how much your medical expenses – not covered by insurance – will be for next year and submit the amount you want to save with your pre-tax contribution. Your fund accumulates through automatic payroll deductions.

After you go for the treatment, you submit a claim and you will receive a reimbursement check from your account in a couple of months.

Romer pointed out two downsides to the program. "One problem is that if you don't use it you lose it," she said. That is, if your medical

bills are less than the amount that you have set aside in the account, the unused amount will be forfeited at the end of the year, in accordance with IRS rules.

"The other is it's a lot of paperwork," said Romer. "First, you have to show it's not covered by your insurance," she said. "That is, you have to apply and have it rejected. It can be frustrating, but if you're someone that's good on the paper trail, that will help."

**By reducing your gross salary for tax purposes, you save money.**

You will receive a quarterly personal account statement, detailing what you have spent and how much is in your account.

To sign up for an HCFSA for calendar year 2004, you should enroll before mid-November. To obtain forms for the exact dates for enrollment, go to your college personnel office, or contact the City of New York's FSA Administrative Office at 212-306-7760, 40 Rector Street, 3rd Floor, NYC 10006 (online at [nyc.gov/html/olr](http://nyc.gov/html/olr)).

## HIGHER ED IN BRIEF

### UK unions oppose tuition increase

Students and advocates opposed to a government proposal to charge up to £3,000 in fees for university tuition in the UK won one battle when the Trades Union Congress conference opposed the fees in September. The proposal would allow individual colleges to charge fees as they see fit. Currently, all colleges, except one, can charge only a government set rate of £1,050 a year to undergraduates. A poll conducted for the Association of University Teachers, which opposes the increase, found that 80% of the public opposes the fees, known as "top-up fees." Until five years ago, the UK provided free higher education and student living stipends.

### Yale strike heats up

Seeking better pay and benefits, 2,000 workers at Yale University have been on strike for 18 days as *Clarion* went to press. On September 13, John Sweeney, AFL-CIO president, and 120 other people were arrested at Yale in a civil disobedience, and 10,000 people attended a demonstration to support the workers.

Locals 34 and 35 of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International, representing secretaries, food service workers, maintenance employees, researchers and registrars, are seeking salary increases in line with local public universities and Harvard, appropriate pension benefits and job security. This is the seventh strike in the last ten contract negotiations at Yale, which has a notorious reputation for poor labor relations. The workers have been without a contract since January 2002.

### UC turns away students

The University of California cancelled 1,500 incoming mid-year transfers from community colleges in September due to \$410 million in budget cuts from the State. In addition, UC may for the first time have to cut enrollment growth by 5,000 students next year, and the California State University system may have to turn away thousands as well.

The cuts to enrollment would break California's Master Plan for Higher Education, which since 1960 has guaranteed a place for the top 12.5% of state high school students and top performing community college students. CSU has guaranteed admission to the top one-third of state students. The enrollment limits come in addition to 30% tuition increases at UC and CSU implemented this fall and a 64% increase in tuition at the states' community colleges.

## HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

## The “accountability” story

By MARK F. SMITH

First passed in 1965, and reauthorized every six years, the Higher Education Act coordinates all federal government programs in higher education. Although Congress will not actually take the key votes on reauthorizing the HEA until next year, a few central themes have emerged that promise to dominate the debate.

For example, the administration and its congressional supporters, such as House Education and the Workforce Committee chair, John Boehner of Ohio, stress “four guiding tenets – accessibility, accountability, affordability and quality.” AAUP is also advancing four key themes – access, quality, diversity, and openness. Two duplicate the administration’s themes, but the Association places “access” and “quality” at the forefront of our program, while Representative Boehner claims “accountability is the hub of the higher education wheel.” He goes on to identify “accessibility, affordability and quality” as “the spokes that keep the wheel in motion.”

A stress on accountability is consistent with the overall management outlook of this administration. Prior to the Enron scandal, White House publicists touted the fact that George W. Bush is the first president with a M.B.A. Since then, such claims have been more limited in circulation, but the outlook continues to drive legislative goals. The administration continues to rely on decision-making models that stress profit and loss analysis with an abiding suspicion of any measures that cannot readily be expressed

as numbers. In higher education, the message coming from the administration and its supporters is that accountability is to be measured by graduation and retention rates. In this view, higher education is just another commodity, with the market determining consumers’ decisions based on price.

## NUMBERS GAME

Graduation and retention rates are easily quantifiable, and the emphasis on them is based on a common picture of college life. Eighteen-year-old high school graduates go off to live in college dormitories, attend daytime classes, study at night, enjoy football games on weekends and, after four years, graduate with a diploma. Despite the well-documented reality that today’s students are older, working, raising families and not finishing college in the traditional 4-year span, we continue to focus on an outmoded picture. The House Education and Workforce Committee heard testimony in July that condemned US higher education because “the average 5-year institutional graduation rate is approximately 51%. Among the lowest income college entrants, an abysmal 8% gain a degree.”

These numbers will sound familiar to New Yorkers, who remember similar attacks that then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani launched against CUNY in the 1990s. But as *Daily News* columnist Juan Gonzalez pointed out in 1994, while “only 8% of an entering bachelor’s degree class in 1988 graduated after four years, 48% of the class graduated after eight years.” We

should be praising the perseverance of students who continue with their studies while working full- or part-time jobs, raising families, and overcoming disadvantaged backgrounds. Instead, their persistence is portrayed as evidence of failure.

Republicans in Congress have also sought to use the theme of “accountability” to blame colleges for rising tuition costs. “Many colleges, both public and private, are not operating as efficiently as they should, and their prices reflect it,” Rep. Howard “Buck” McKeon wrote in the July 11 *Chronicle of Higher Education*. A House subcommittee chaired by McKeon held hearings that month which centered on his proposal to tie federal aid to a “College Affordability Index.” This would ultimately deny any institution eligibility for federal student aid funds if it raised tuition more than twice the Consumer’s Price Index. Given recent tuition increases of up to 40% in public institutions because of reduced state funding, such a proposal threatens to deny federal student aid money to many of the institutions where it is most needed.

Much of the debate at the hearing focused on problems with McKeon’s simplistic approach, and McKeon stressed that his proposal was not in final form. (This prompted one of his allies to rise to his defense by announcing “we don’t know what we’re talking about here.”) But one witness who accepted McKeon’s framework proposed turning to technology as a solution.

Because “just 25 courses generate about



President George W. Bush’s vision for higher education shortchanges access and quality.

half of all student enrollments in community colleges and about a third of enrollments in four-year institutions” a distance education package of such courses would cut costs dramatically, testified Dr. Carol Twigg, director of the Center for Academic Transformation at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Unfortunately, most studies suggest that when distance education is done properly it can cost more, not less, than traditional modes of delivery.

While this version of “accountability” has drawn little notice outside of those who closely follow higher education policy, that might change early next year. According to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, “The White House is considering having Mr. Bush, as part of his re-election bid, issue a scathing critique of higher education early next year,” with a demand for “greater accountability” as the central theme. Administration strategists, the *Chronicle* reports, “are still trying to determine whether being tough on colleges will have popular appeal.”

## FEATHERBEDDING

The question is not really accountability itself. No one is against “accountability.”

The question is not whether higher education should be accountable, but what this really means. Is the real problem in higher education some sort of academic featherbedding? Or are critics comparing today’s higher education with an idealized picture that does not reflect the demands of today’s reality? Given the reduction of state aid to public institutions, might the types of national restrictions now being proposed actually make the situation worse?

AAUP has supported the core structure of the HEA from its beginning, although even in 1965 we criticized the unwillingness of Congress to appropriate adequate funds. That problem continues today, and it is time to hold our legislators accountable for their failure to provide higher education with adequate support.

Mark F. Smith is the AAUP’s Director of Government Relations. For more on AAUP’s views on the HEA, visit [www.aaup.org](http://www.aaup.org).

## MAKING CHANGE

## Anatomy of a victory

By BARBARA BOWEN  
PSC President

One thing I learned from the writing of CUNY professor Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick – particularly *Epistemology of the Closet* – is never to foreclose in advance your sense of how far a political intervention will lead.

I was reminded of this while reading articles in this month’s *Clarion* and thinking about a string of recent victories. The new tuition remission program at the Graduate Center is on the cover, and inside are reports on a pre-tax transit benefit for CUNY employees and the effects of the \$4.5 million community college scholarship fund that the union helped to design. Each of these victories had an element of indirection and even surprise, but together they remind us that it’s essential to press forward on multiple fronts, even when we are unsure that the result will be immediate or entirely predictable.

Take the Grad Center tuition remission. The union has made this a priority for three years, even though we sometimes felt that we were preaching in the wilderness as we

first tried to make the case to Albany. Gradually, though, we gained support. By June of this year, several state senators were listening avidly to doctoral students explain their Ph.D. dissertations and pledging to allocate funds from their “member-item money” directly for this purpose. When the money came, however, it was from the Chancellor’s Office, not yet from Albany (although we continue to work with supportive legislators there).

## RESURGENCE

The union’s campaign started with a vision of a resurgent CUNY, coupled with an analysis – from our lived experience as faculty – of why it’s important to the entire university that graduate students be supported. Then there was budget analysis and research, behind-the-scenes negotiations, and last year a contract that produced \$2 million to support graduate tuition. CUNY Administrators also pressed the issue. Meanwhile, members of the doctoral faculty raised tuition remission in constituent visits to their own legislators,

and it was incorporated into the legislative package advanced by NYSUT, the statewide education union. That meant that colleagues from SUNY and the public schools were also mentioning it in their Albany visits.

There is a similar story to be told about the transit benefit, something the union’s been working on for over a year, and about the community college tuition scholarship, where PSC research – especially about the inadequacies of TAP – formed the basis for the City Council’s program. We weren’t able to stop the tuition increase, but because we had worked closely with the City Council for the last three years, we were able to help thousands of students stay in school.

I take heart from these stories, especially in a time when nationally and internationally a far-right political agenda is passing itself off as the norm. What I learn is not that we can hope only for partial victories, but rather that vision, creativity, analysis, and persistence remain among our most powerful political tools. That’s not a bad lesson to take into the new academic year.

Don’t give up; press on many fronts.

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

## Michigan: one up and one down

By **CECELIA McCALL**  
PSC Secretary

**A**bandoned by his father, mother dead by the time he reached four, raised by grandparents, first job at thirteen, worked his way through college and today a millionaire business owner – a typical Horatio Alger rags-to-riches story so much a part of American lore, and the brief biography of Ward Connerly, the self-loathing African American obsessed with ending affirmative action. Connerly boasts a racial heritage of Choctaw Indian, Irish, French and black; however, it is his black genes that he finds troublesome. He has said, “It is difficult for me to think black as a lot of people expect me to.”

The backlash against affirmative action in higher education is intertwined with Ward Connerly’s public career. Though a beneficiary of affirmative action in that his minority firm benefits from federal and state set-aside contracts, he is the poster boy of the anti-affirmative action movement. In 1995, as a member of the California Board of Regents, Connerly engineered the resolution banning affirmative action in admissions in the University of California system. A year later, working with his buddy Governor Pete Wilson, he spearheaded the winning campaign for Proposition 209 that amended the California Constitution to forbid the use of race and gender as factors in state hiring, contracting and education. As a result, by 1998 African American, Chicano and Native American admissions to Berkeley had dropped by 56%.

## ON THE ROAD

Connerly’s American Civil Rights Institute and its political-action committee, the American Civil Rights Coalition, took the California show on the road, supporting and funding the suits against the University of Michigan’s admissions policies for its undergraduate division and law school. The cases reached the Supreme Court, in the first challenge to affirmative action in higher education in a generation. The Court, however, surprised Connerly and many others with its long-awaited ruling this past June. In a decision that offered something to both proponents and opponents of affirmative action, the Court upheld the Michigan Law School’s admissions policy (*Gutter v. Bollinger*), but disallowed the undergraduate division’s system of awarding 20 of 150 points to certain minority applicants (*Gratz v. Bollinger*).

In the majority opinion on the latter case,

Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote that the undergraduate system was too mechanistic and did not give enough weight to individual differences. In the majority opinion for the law school, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor (a beneficiary of affirmative action since she was chosen for the Supreme Court in large part because of her gender) stated that it employed a “highly individualized, holistic review of each applicant’s file.” She held that the law school policy does not violate the equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

## BAKKE

The Court upheld Justice Lewis Powell’s position in the 1978 Bakke Case (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*), which held that while race could not be used alone, it could be weighed along with other factors if a university wanted to eliminate effects of past discrimination. The *Bakke* decision also held that the state has a compelling interest in diversity.

This was all too much for Justice Clarence Thomas, who wrote a dissenting opinion. Though Thomas is the grandson of a sharecropper, and twice a recipient of affirmative action (both at Yale Law School and in his appointment to the Court), his dissent again proved that he is the best friend of the downtrodden white man. “Racial discrimination is not a permissible solution to the self-inflicted wounds of this elitist policy,” Thomas wrote of affirmative action. He has argued that recipients of affirmative action are forever stigmatized and suffer from feelings of insecurity as a result of being accepted into schools for which they are not qualified.

## PUBLIC COLLEGES

The two new Supreme Court rulings most directly affect public, tax-supported colleges and universities, but private and prestigious colleges such as Dartmouth and Harvard that have been guided by *Bakke* feel that their standards will pass scrutiny. On the other hand, schools whose model has been closer to that of Michigan’s undergraduate division will have to adjust their policies.

One can’t help but wonder how CUNY will react. Since 1976 (two years before *Bakke*), CUNY has been steadily dismantling its open admissions program, the latest blow coming in 1998 and 1999 when the Board of Trustees voted to further restrict admis-



Brian Stauffer

sions by eliminating remediation at the senior colleges. One of the loudest voices against remediation was that of Herman Badillo, a proponent of the “bootstrap” philosophy of self-help, who was soon rewarded with the post of BoT Chair.

It’s remarkable how some people of color, who have achieved a measure of success, feel the need to pull up the ladder behind them. This is what unites Connerly, Thomas and Badillo. They seem to feel that the value of their “Horatio Alger” stories is somehow threatened by social programs that attack barriers of discrimination. I therefore have a proposal for those who, like this trio, may feel tainted or guilty for having received preferential treatment: I suggest that they practice voluntary retribution and penance.

People of Connerly’s ilk who have profited from government contracts can refund the money and pledge never to accept another contract. They can write codicils to their wills, requiring their heirs to swear an oath never to benefit from affirmative action. If there is any suspicion of advantage

due to race then they will be made to recompense, be disinherited and drummed out of the family.

## ON MERIT ALONE?

It’s not too late for Clarence Thomas to resign his seat on the court, return his degree to Yale and start all over again. He can study for the LSAT, perhaps under the tutelage of his mentor, Antonin Scalia, and instruct Yale to consider only his merits. If it does and he is not admitted – well, there’s always them cotton fields or an assembly line. I’m sure there’s more than one laborer who’d love to be near enough to Clarence to lay hands on him.

Throughout the history of this country, inequality has been sanctioned by law. Race alone has been the root of exclusion from jobs, housing, healthcare and education. The Court, however, held that race alone cannot be the basis for inclusion. It must be one of many factors, the “plus” factor. Justice O’Connor stated that Law School must continually reexamine the admissions procedure and eliminate it as soon as practicable.

O’Connor has said she expects that racial preferences will no longer be necessary in twenty-five years. I suppose she believes that social circumstances will be such that discrimination against people of color will have ended. Race won’t matter.

I hope so. I hope that the color line, which W.E.B. DuBois identified as the single most important problem in the twentieth century, does not dominate all of the twenty-first. Can it be resolved in just a quarter-century? I have my doubts. I don’t expect to be around in 2028, but I’m doubtful that our children will see the end of racism in America by then.

Perhaps our grandchildren will have the chance to live in a race-neutral country. Perhaps that country will even be America.

## The role of Connerly, Thomas, Badillo

## Clarion SEPTEMBER 2003

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# Buildings, history & Dixie Chicks

By TOMIO GERON

## A life in the day of Ralph Giordano

When Ralph Giordano can, he likes to make a quick stop at the College of Staten Island's childcare center. "The kids say, 'Want a cookie? Want to play?'" Giordano says with a smile. "And I do admit I'll bounce a ball and eat a cookie."

But Giordano has managed construction work on the center's outdoor play area, and he likes to see how it is being put to use.

Giordano, CSI's assistant director of campus planning, is proud of his work. "All of this surface was wood," he says, gesturing at a bench. "Kids would get splinters, hanging on it, so we replaced it with a rosin material. Little things like that make the job worthwhile. When you can change the benches and then watch the kids running around."

A Higher Education Officer and a registered architect, Giordano designed the forest green tent structure that extends over part of the play area. "We had to give them some shade," he says. The shape was inspired by a shade structure he had seen at the NY Aquarium in Coney Island. "There's a little cantilever, so we didn't have to put any poles in back there," he explains. It's one less thing for running children to collide with. "This is where the fun stuff comes in, designing something so problems don't show up."

Ralph Giordano likes to see kids happy, but that is not the only reason this project has meant a lot to him. "I know that every single child in here, they have a parent who is in the classroom and is able to get an education because of this," he says.

### MOVING

Probably the biggest project Giordano's been involved in was CSI's move to its current 204-acre campus, on the site of the defunct Willowbrook State School. It was a massive undertaking. Not only did it require renovating old buildings and building new ones, it also meant moving all the furniture, equipment and disoriented faculty, staff and students to the current site. The whole process ran from about 1986 to 1995, and the final move took two years.

"It was quite confusing the first year," Giordano recalls, "but now we can laugh about it. It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences."

Giordano stands inside the 2M Building, a massive structure built in 1929 that once housed CSI's maintenance department. Previously scheduled to be demolished, the building is now being renovated with heat and electricity for future classroom or office use - which will help with CSI's overcrowding problem.

Inside, it is unlit and damp. Giordano casts a baleful eye at some boxes stacked six feet high. "Unfortunately, most of my life is this stuff. Papers and forms, documents and shop drawings. Papers that we nev-



Ralph Giordano, assistant director of campus planning, at the CSI children's center playground, which he helped design.

er know whether we'll get around to using."

Sometimes Giordano gets to spend an afternoon at the drafting board, knocking out some drawings. "That doesn't happen as much as I'd like it to," he says. "A lot of the typical day is creating work orders, purchase requests. Finding out why something didn't get ordered."

But a basic part of his job is also getting out "on site," as they call it in construction. "If I have projects going on, if I have people actively working, I'll usually swing by on my way in," he explains. Staying on top of a project means talking with people, seeing how things are going, and he clearly enjoys this part of his work.

Giordano gets around the sprawling campus in a converted golf cart. Today, on the way back from the 2M Building, he pulls over to speak to Jason Fein and Corey Shapiro, two HEOs who work in the recreation center. "I heard you had a visit from the EPA," says Giordano. "Apparently we have a violation." They talk about the problem, and Giordano tells them it should be easy to fix.

### DEDUCTIONS

Fein tells this reporter that when he first started at CSI, he thought the deductions from his check automatically made him a member of the union. "I had no idea I had to fill out that little card," he said - until Giordano told him.

It is much the way that Giordano got help when he started working at CSI 19 years ago. "When I first started here, the union people took care

of me," he says. Giordano remembers how Ken Klindtworth, director of campus planning and a union member, explained everything to him about CUNY and the union. "The very first day," recalls Giordano, "he led me through the forms:

'Check that box, do this, do that.' He told me about the route to 13.3b, 'HEO tenure.'" It was important advice, says Giordano. "When you first come in, the last thing you think about is ten years from now."

The help that Klindtworth gave him then is part of what inspires Giordano to be involved with the union today. "I guess I owe something back," he says.

Giordano recently decided to become more active in the union, and when you ask him why, his first response may come as a surprise. "A lot of it is what's currently going on in the world," he explains. "I've gotten very political in the last couple of years, especially having two children of draft age. I don't want to see them die."

And then there are the problems at CSI that he sees every day that he wants to change, which led him to serve on CSI's new HEO Labor-Management Committee. He's glad he's hearing the word "HEO" more often than in the past. "There are some changes happening," Giordano says. "It's in writing, and it's in the contract and it's good stuff. People realize the union is not just faculty, it's also HEOs and CLTs."

Health and safety issues affect both his union role and his profes-

sional life, and he plans to get a master's in environmental health at Hunter. It will be his second master's degree.

Giordano got an M.A. in history at CSI ten years ago; in addition to his job as a HEO, he is also an adjunct faculty member there, teaching classes in history and American studies. In October, he'll see his first book published: *Fun and Games in Twentieth Century America: A Historical Guide to Leisure* (Greenwood) is a decade-by-decade examination of leisure activities and the social conditions that shaped them.

### SWING AND COUNTRY

Giordano combines his academic interests with some of his personal passions. He is a fervent music fan, especially of swing and country, and goes with his wife to hear live music almost every week.

Growing up, "there was always music in my house," he recalls. He remembers working in his parents' dress shop and always hearing the sultry sounds of Sinatra, Dean Martin and Tony Bennett on the radio. There was an uncle who worked for Buddy Holly.

This fall Giordano is presenting a paper at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association on censorship of the pop country band, the Dixie Chicks - their song "Goodbye Earl" and the reaction against it. "It's about domestic violence," Giordano explains, "and 45% of country music radio stations banned it." His paper analyzes public perceptions of the band, and differences in the reactions to male and female artists who address this topic.

Giordano's son Matt, a senior at

St. John's, works in the CSI bookstore. On his way to have lunch at the school café, Giordano stops by to say hello.

"How was Metallica?" Giordano says.

"Good," Matt says, deadpan. He wears an orange T-shirt and khakis.

"Talk to you tonight?" the father says.

"Yeah."

This turns out to have been an exchange between academic colleagues. Though he doesn't look it, Matt is excited because he is about to get published, Giordano says.

Matt and Ralph have collaborated on a paper on the "zoot suit riots" of the 1940s that will be published in a forthcoming book on youth subcultures.

Matt, a communications major and music fan, is thinking about a career in journalism. "I'm trying to convince him to get his Ph.D.," says Ralph, and the zoot suit article interested them both. "The editor was looking for a combination of a faculty member and an undergraduate," he says. "When I indicated it would be myself and my son, she got excited because it was something she'd never expected."

Ralph and Matt met weekly over the summer to work on the project, and Ralph says "it's scary" how similar their notes were on some of the things they both read. The work has gone well, he says, and they're planning to go together to the Midwest Modern Language Association meeting in Chicago this November, where Giordano is presenting.

But the two colleagues still interact as father and son. "He's going to see Pearl Jam tonight. He didn't invite me!" Giordano says, mock-incredulous. Apparently, collaboration has its limits.



### 15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

## Meet and greet

This Fall, many new faculty and many new staff are starting jobs at CUNY. This month, take a few minutes from the breakneck pace of the beginning of the semester and introduce yourself to a new colleague. Make sure they know we have a union, and encourage them to sign a card. If they haven't received a copy of Clarion, pass yours on to them. Starting a new job at a place as big as CUNY can be daunting and there is a lot of information to process, so your new colleagues will appreciate the personal connection. Say hello, and help the union grow.