

Clarion

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SEPTEMBER 2002



A YEAR LATER

Above, looking south from BMCC towards the former site of the World Trade Center. In this issue, BMCC students, faculty and staff look back on a difficult year, and talk about the new one that lies ahead. **PAGE 12**



BENEFITS Hard choices for the Welfare Fund

The Fund's financial crisis, and the decisions ahead.

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BENEFITS

CUNY's new Early Retirement Incentive

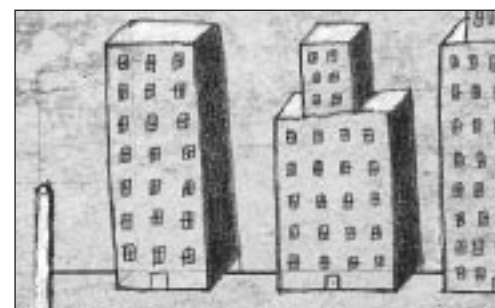
The ERI means more generous rules for retirement benefits, allowing many to retire early. Find out if you are eligible, and how to file. **PAGE 8**



AFT CONVENTION

PSC delegates make some waves

Federal funding, indoor air quality, diversity, tax policy, war and peace – there was a lot to talk about at the convention of the American Federation of Teachers. **PAGE 9**



METROPOLIS

City University and urban public health

A faculty-led initiative is finding new ways that CUNY can contribute to the health of cities by working across campuses and disciplines. **PAGE 10**

Queens bus drivers end strike

By **MANNY NESS**
Brooklyn College

On August 6, 1,460 Queens bus drivers working for three private companies voted to end a 51-day walk-out and go back to work, welcome news for 116,000 daily riders.

Why did the strike last so long? The answer is bound up with the City's central role in running these "private" lines.

Frustrated after working 18 months without a contract, Queens bus drivers carried out a one-day strike in January and two-day strike in late February. The job actions led to a March 19 settlement modeled on the City's contract with the municip-

Contract maintains health benefits, job security

pal workers' union DC 37: a 27-month agreement with a 9% increase in the economic package and a 19% increase in funding to cover health benefits.

Though workers for the three bus lines – Queens Surface, Jamaica Buses and Triboro Coach – are classified as private employees, the settlement followed the DC 37 pattern because the City is intimately involved in every aspect of the three lines' operations. "Most of the actual buses are owned by the city, as are some of the depots," explained TWU 100 spokesperson Dave Katzman. The lines themselves – routes,

timetables and fares – are controlled by the City of New York and operated under franchise contracts, with a City subsidy covering about 60% of operating costs.

THE CITY'S ROLE

Since the City foots most of the bill for running the three lines, it is not surprising that Labor Commissioner James Hanley played an active role in the negotiations. The March agreement was worked out with City representatives present, and TWU 100 says it was Hanley who had suggested that the agreement follow the DC 37 pattern.

But the March 19 deal fell apart when the City walked away from it, claiming that it could not afford to increase its funding of bus drivers' health care by more than 3.5%, the average rise in the Consumer Price Index. Since the rise in health care costs has been far steeper, this would have required slashing workers' health insurance coverage.

Faced with this grim alternative, drivers went out on strike on June 17. The Mayor's response was to declare the strike "a private matter" and refuse to get involved. "We are not a party to these negotiations," a City Hall spokesperson said in late June. "We are not the employer."

Many Queens politicians, including City Council Transportation Committee chair John Liu, denounced the mayor's hands-off approach. "The administration can't keep saying that they have nothing to do with this," Liu told a City Hall press conference in late June. "It's ludicrous."

INTO THE VACUUM

Queens Borough President Helen Marshall stepped into the vacuum and tried to broker an agreement. Her efforts were unsuccessful but were followed by an August deal under which the City agreed to lend the bus lines \$3.75 million. With Bloomberg hinting that he would like to see an MTA takeover of the private lines, job security was a rising concern. A City Council resolution supporting the union's demand for continuity of employment helped

make the settlement possible, and soon the buses were rolling again.

"With your support, we have saved the health benefits for the families of our workers," Local 100 President Roger Toussaint told members. "And we have made great progress in winning basic job protection." Some divisions within Local 100 had made the conduct of the strike more difficult, echoing the hard-fought election through which rank-and-file activist Toussaint became Local 100's president in 2000. But the union's Executive Board

preserved enough unity to bring the strike to a successful conclusion. The bus strike could foreshadow the mayor's bargaining strategy for subway and bus workers employed by the MTA, whose contract expires on December 15. Bloomberg has already said that because MTA workers "are asking for a lot more money," New Yorkers can expect a subway fare increase.

Bloomberg's stand is in sharp contrast to that of Local 100, which opposes any rise in the subway fare. The union notes that if the MTA were subsidized at the same rate as the suburban carriers in New York State, the city would have an additional \$325 million in annual revenue. A fare hike would be "an indirect tax on working people, rather than raising taxes on commercial businesses and developers, the real beneficiaries of the mass transit system," said Local 100's Katzman.

Local 100, the Straphangers' Campaign and Citizen Action are all organizing against any fare increase.



Kicking off another union struggle: Sen. Hillary Clinton steps out in support of the Radio City Rockettes, members of the American Guild of Variety Artists. After Cablevision, which owns Radio City Music Hall, announced plans to eliminate the Rockettes' job roster and require the veteran dancers to audition for every show, the unionized performers launched a series of protests in mid-August. They won some job security provisions for next year and \$2 million in buyouts.



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

CUNY admissions requirements hurt ESL students

● A *New York Times* article on August 20 stated that the new 1999 CUNY admissions standards have not "significantly affected" the number of black and Latino students at CUNY. The article, however, failed to investigate how the numbers of English as a Second Language students (many whom are Hispanics) have been declining at CUNY since the new policies of the Board of Trustees have been in effect. In 1995 there were 700 ESL students at City College, but now there are fewer than 70 – a 90% decrease. All other CUNY four-year colleges have also experienced serious declines in ESL enrollment.

New York is still a city of immigrants. Recent CUNY policies have

restricted and denied entrance to the children of immigrants. The Board of Regents needs to carefully review how CUNY's policy has adversely contributed to the shameful loss of ESL students and programs at CUNY. Admission tests and a maze of complicated admission requirements have kept ESL students at the gates of CUNY, just looking in.

– Susan DiRaimo, President
CUNY ESL Council

For whose profit?

● "Edison Schools on the Edge" (Summer *Clarion*) did us a service by exposing the poor performance of the Edison project and its "educa-

tion-for-profit" model. This objective account seriously calls into question the ability of Edison's Chairman, Benno Schmidt – who also happens to be the interim head of our own Board of Trustees.

The insider loans that this former law professor received from Edison would now be illegal, under the Corporate Responsibility Act of 2002.

What we need now is to find a way to display further Mr. Schmidt's dissolving legitimacy as someone who is in significant control of CUNY's destiny. All faculty and staff, including the PSC leadership, should not miss an opportunity to broadcast just how scandalously inappropriate it is for this man to continue to be connected in any way

with public, tax-levy-funded education. His case presents a clear conflict of interest, but his questionable accounting procedures and other CEO-related miscreancy also manifest his failure as an educator and administrator. The limit of self-serving incompetence in public officials shouldn't be infinitely plastic.

– Charles Molesworth
Queens College

Spouse insurance

● One of my concerns as a young faculty member was the prospect of the loss of my wife's medical coverage if I should die. Would it be possible to offer optional guaranteed medical insurance coverage for

spouses of deceased PSC members? Such coverage need not be subsidized if that is a problem. Since the target would be young faculty members (Medicare would be available at age 65) the costs should not be excessive and in any case, the insurance would be optional. I think such insurance offers peace of mind, at least to some, and has no apparent disadvantages.

– Morton Davis
CCNY (emeritus)

Write to Clarion

Letters should be no more than 150-200 words in length and are subject to editing.

RF talks get close, then stall

By PETER HOGNESS and TOMIO GERON

"We, the undersigned members of the PSC-RF/CUNY, are writing to show our support for our bargaining team's rejection of management's most recent economic offer." That's what PSC members at the CUNY Research Foundation (RF/CUNY) told RF management in a petition delivered at the end of August.

Negotiations between the PSC and the Research Foundation broke off in July after management walked away from the table. At a chapter meeting later that month, PSC members at the RF voted "no confidence" in management's bargaining team, and asked RF Executive Director Richard Rothbard to agree to mediation. But Rothbard rejected the

idea in a letter to the PSC.

RF members hope to resume bargaining after Labor Day and are looking forward to receiving a new proposal from management. "I think we're going to get another offer," said Antoinette Morizio of the RF Chapter Executive Committee. "They know they can't keep prolonging it."

The standoff came after some progress at the table earlier in the summer. The two sides had narrowed their differences on wage increases, and management gave up on its attempt to impose a 24-hour, 7-day schedule of operations on RF workers. Workers at the RF had strongly objected to the 24/7 proposal, saying it would severely disrupt family life.



Tomio Geron

Elizabeth Gonzalez, left, and Rosa Sannuto at an RF meeting this summer where members voted "no confidence" in the management bargaining team.

The main points still at issue concern wages and the pension plan. On salary increases, the two sides are very close in percentage terms – except that management wants three

six-month delays in when they take effect. "No one's going for that," said Morizio. A six-month delay would mean "it's really just half the salary increase," she said.

CUNY-wide negotiations

PSC prepares for next contract talks

By PETER HOGNESS

The PSC has begun preparations for the next round of University-wide contract bargaining. A membership survey and special chapter meetings are planned for the Fall.

The current contract, ratified by PSC members in May and approved by the Trustees in June, expires October 31, 2002. Initial talks on a new agreement are expected to begin around that time, with the current agreement remaining in force while negotiations proceed. Printed copies of the current contract will be distributed later in the Fall.

Background research for the next negotiations has already begun. The PSC is working with the American Association of University Professors and American Federation of Teachers to analyze pay and con-

tract provisions at similar universities around the country.

The union's Executive Council has designed a questionnaire that will be sent to all PSC members in the Fall. "We represent the members," said bargaining team member Jean Weisman, chair of the HEO chapter. "We need to find out about people's needs and concerns, and what they think should be our priorities," Weisman said. "People have a lot of information and concerns about working conditions that tend to come up in informal discussion. Filling out the survey is a way to turn those informal concerns into contract provisions." In addition to helping to shape demands, the survey creates a base of data that can

be used to make the union's case at the negotiating table.

How to develop the next set of contract demands was a major focus of the PSC Executive Council's strategic planning retreat this Summer. "We want to go into the next round with an approach that builds on what we achieved in the last contract – as well as what we didn't," PSC President Barbara Bowen explained. "We won things in the last agreement that should be expanded, to strengthen the University and the professional lives of our members. But there are other areas in which CUNY refused to accede to our demands, where we will press hard for our members' urgent needs."

Lessons from the last contract will be combined with new ideas, Bowen said. At the chapter meetings on the contract, she said, "We want a broad discussion where people can put their ideas on the table, debate what our priorities should be, and start to plan how they will take part in the contract campaign."

After the chapter meetings the discussion will continue in the union's Executive Council and Delegate Assembly. As provided in the PSC's constitution, both bodies will vote on the final list of demands.

A new element in the union's contract preparations will be a PSC Organizing Institute, to be held later in the fall. "The Organizing Institute is for folks who have been organizers and for those who can imagine be-

coming one," said Mike Fabricant, PSC Vice President for Senior Colleges. "We'll exchange our own histories and experiences, and also focus on some very specific things that need to be done on campus." The goal, he said, is "to develop a cohort of folks out on the campuses with a base of skills, a critical mass that can build more and more support for the union, inside and outside the University." With that sort of momentum, Fabricant hopes the contract campaign can "ignite the sense of excitement and possibility that can be part of work in the university, and offer the union as a vehicle for changing our lives at work."

In the next round of bargaining, Bowen emphasized, building a strong coalition with other unions will be essential. "This is going to be a difficult climate for negotiations, and it's going to be very important for us to support other unions as they go into their contract fights this fall," she said. "It's clear that their settlements will have an impact on us."

THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Both the City and State have already announced large budget deficits, Bowen noted, yet neither the mayor nor the governor has yet called for considering any significant new sources of revenue. "Because we're a public employee union, we're going to have to work in the public, political sphere to alter the political discussion," Bowen said.

"There has to be consideration of a more just tax policy that produces more income for public life."

Back pay notes

By CLARION STAFF

Retroactive pay increases due under the new PSC/CUNY contract were paid in the August 2nd payroll for community colleges and the August 22nd payroll for senior colleges.

Some types of retro increases, however, have to be calculated by hand by your payroll office and will be paid in the Fall. These include back pay for most continuing ed

teachers and some adjuncts, as well as for overload work by full-timers and summer pay for part-timers.

If you think you did not receive the correct amount of back pay, contact your campus or worksite payroll office.

If you need to see the new salary table published in the Summer *Clarion*, check the PSC Web site at www.psc-cuny.org. You can get a printed copy by calling the union office, at 212-354-1252.

CUNY NEWS IN BRIEF

Arbitration victory

The PSC won an arbitration decision against CUNY in July on behalf of a College Laboratory Technician at Hostos Community College. The CLT was not reappointed in 1999, despite having had four consecutive satisfactory evaluations and no unsatisfactory ratings in any specific areas. The arbitrator ruled that this action violated the collective bargaining agreement because the reasons provided by the college president for denying reappointment were not supported by the grievant's written record. The case will now go before a neutral select committee.

Beauty in Brooklyn

The most beautiful college campus in the country is CUNY's own Brooklyn College, according to a new survey. The Princeton Review's *Best 345 College Rankings* puts Brooklyn at the top of 345 colleges surveyed nationwide. Brooklyn's 26-acre campus was also ranked fifth for "best academic bang for your buck," fifth for diversity and ninth for location in a "great college town." Despite its classic brick buildings and leafy grounds, some observers expressed surprise at Brooklyn's beauty ranking. Others noted that the ratings were based on assessments by current students of their own campuses. "Given that our students live in New York City, it's not surprising that they consider Brooklyn College beautiful," commented Shirley Frank, an adjunct at York and City Tech. "I think it's kind of moving." One thing is clear from the survey: Brooklyn College is the most beautiful in the eyes of its students.

Pataki signs tuition bill

On August 9, Gov. Pataki signed legislation that provides for thousands of undocumented immigrant students who live in New York to pay the lower in-state tuition rate at public universities, ending CUNY's tuition hike for undocumented students imposed last Spring. Those attending included PSC activists and members of the Mexican-American Student Alliance who had gone on a three-day hunger strike to protest the increase.

Correction

Susan O'Malley, newly elected as chair of the University Faculty Senate, was misidentified in our last issue. She is a University-wide Officer of the PSC, Professor of Liberal Studies at the Graduate Center and Professor of English at Kingsborough Community College.

CUNY ed programs & teacher tests

By TOMIO GERON and PETER HOGNESS

CUNY students' pass rates on New York State teacher certification tests have shown a "sharp increase" compared to three years ago, the *New York Times* reported on June 18. The *Times* cited tighter admission and retention requirements as the cause. On June 23 the *Post* took the same view, and said that "a CUNY diploma is actually starting to mean something."

But a closer look at the numbers reveals that CUNY students had performed much better in the past than either paper reported.

In 1997-98, New York State announced that only 70% of CUNY students passed the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST), one of two key exams needed for preliminary teacher certification. By 2000-2001, the State said, CUNY's pass rate was 93% – good news, because a result below 80% puts a college's accreditation in danger. (Results for the other test, the Assessment of Teaching Skills-Written, were similar.)

But what the *Times* and the *Post* did not report is that New York State changed how it counts the numbers. Until three years ago, many test-takers were counted as CUNY education students who should not have been. The figures had included people who had never taken a single education class, simply because they had at some point attended CUNY, according to Shirley Cohen, professor of special education. The numbers included others who had never studied at CUNY, but had simply taken the

A look behind the numbers

exams on a CUNY campus, said 80th Street spokesperson Rita Rodin.

The biggest jump in CUNY's reported pass rates in fact came in 1998-99, the first year that NY State began to be more careful about which test-takers were ascribed to which schools. CUNY's pass rate on the LAST was 88%, a one-year increase of 18%. Meanwhile the number of test-takers ascribed to CUNY dropped sharply: on the LAST, the total fell from 4,364 to just 1,355.

It's true that CUNY's teacher training programs have tightened their admissions requirements in recent years.

But these changes were generally not in place by 1998-99, so they cannot explain the one-year jump in CUNY's scores. For example, Hunter did raise the grade point average (GPA) required to enter its undergraduate program in elementary education from 2.5 to 2.75 – but not until Fall 1999. Medgar Evers raised the GPA required for admission to its Education Department from 2.5 to 2.7. This was also in Fall 1999, the year after its LAST pass rate shot up by 19%.

STATE-WIDE OVERHAUL

The certification exams still pose a challenge to some CUNY schools. Medgar Evers and York, for example, still have LAST pass rates below 80%. However, administrators at City, Lehman and elsewhere warned that you can't simply equate the LAST pass rate with a program's quality.

Recent changes in CUNY education programs have deeper roots than a response to bad publicity. In the first place they stem from a broad overhaul of teacher training across New York mandated by the New York State Board of Regents. By 2004, NY State plans to end the option of "independent certification," under which teachers could assemble the requisite number of credits at many different schools without completing any one program. "Now [the State is] saying, 'We're putting the burden of proof on the colleges, we're not playing a credit game any more,'" explained Jim Bruni, former dean of education at Lehman College. "The college has to monitor the student's profession-

al development."

The resulting changes at CUNY have involved more than requiring higher grades. An interview and a writing sample are new additions to Hunter's admissions process. Both Lehman and Hunter now have students take the LAST midway through their programs, and ask those who do poorly to take an English writing course or work on other skills. "We use it for advisement purposes," said Bruni. Alfred Posamentier, dean of the CCNY School of Education, said his school is also giving its students more support. "We've set up a shop so that people could get tutoring if they felt weak in a certain area," he said.

"The thing is really not to be punitive and to put these benchmarks there," says Frances Lowden, head of the education program at Medgar

Evers. "We're trying not to be exclusive, but to be realistic."

Some of the changes, though, have been driven directly by concerns about pass rates on the State exams. Schools including City, Hunter and Lehman began to use the LAST as one of several entrance requirements – until, as Hunter's Cohen explained, "the state [made clear] that this was not the purpose of the test nor was it justified."

In response, CCNY decided that a LAST by any other name was just as sweet. "We were not allowed to use the LAST as an entrance requirement," said Posamentier. "So instead we created an analogous instrument, to be sure that they are up to speed in liberal arts knowledge."

MAGIC OF TEACHING

This focus on an exam that is handed down from above is seen by many faculty as a sign of the lack of professional control over curriculum. "In the view of many educators, this is not the way to go," said Tibbi Duboys, associate professor at the Brooklyn College School of Education. "That is not to say that there shouldn't be some sort of test or minimum standard for admission to the profession. But in every other profession, standards of acceptable practice are set by the practitioners. Not so with teachers." The result, Duboys argued, is a narrowing of public school curriculum that leaves little room for creativity and "the passion, the magic of good teaching."

CUNY faculty and administrators have a variety of views on these and other issues, but there seems to be widespread agreement that recent news coverage doesn't reflect what really goes on inside CUNY's education programs. "I think we're putting out very good teachers," said Seth Rosenberg, an assistant professor at CCNY. "I don't think it has anything to do with the headlines."



Brooklyn College's Wen-Song Hwu discusses a point with his students.

Photo: Lisa Quiñones, photo illustration: Margarita Aguilar

What do teacher exams measure?

By ESTHER KAPLAN

As teacher certification test scores rise and fall, careers and college accreditation hang in the balance. But CUNY ed program administrators are divided on whether the tests are a fair barrier to a teaching career – and a lawsuit scheduled to go to trial this fall has raised questions of the tests' racial bias.

Alfred Posamentier, dean of the City College School of Education, supports the use of a basic-knowledge exam like the LAST, as "one of many screens that we have to see if a person has a minimum competence or intelligence." James Bruni, former dean of education at Lehman College, has taken the test, describing it as intensive, with a tight time constraint; he also noted that it is often offered under less-than-ideal conditions. Nevertheless, he found the LAST a "perfectly reasonable measure" of basic literacy, critical

thinking and writing skills. He characterizes the LAST as similar to the Regent's, the city's high school graduation exam, and says, "If teachers in training can't pass a test that's equivalent to a high school exit test, then we have real problems."

SKEPTICISM VOICED

Other ed program administrators expressed more skepticism. One assistant dean of a CUNY education program told *Clarion*, "I've had students who have been wonderful practitioners, and yet they've struggled on the tests. And you can have people who score [well] on the test and won't be good in the classroom." The irony, the assistant dean said, is that students don't get field work until they've passed the test, so no one will ever know how those students screened out by the test would have fared as teachers.

Frances Lowden, chair of the Department of Education at Medgar

Evers, shared these concerns. "We have students who have failed the exams more than once," she said, "and I am told that they are superb in the classroom." She would like to see a cumulative evaluation of teacher candidates, based on tests, grades and performance. Many Medgar Evers students are immigrants from Haiti, the Dominican Republic and elsewhere, according to Lowden, who said many of these students lack familiarity with standardized exams and struggle with timed reading and writing tests. "It's not an even field. I want the best possible teachers out there, but I don't think this is the way to do it."

New York State has mandated that all public school teachers pass the LAST by Fall 2003 – including many who earned permanent certification years ago. This will dramatically cut the number of teachers of

color in NYC's schools, predicts Sam Anderson of Medgar Evers' Center for Law and Social Justice. Anderson argues that "the current standardized exams were race-, class- and sex-biased from their inception."

Court papers in the racial discrimination lawsuit filed by the Center for Constitutional Rights, which goes to trial this fall, state that the LAST passing rate for white test-takers is 93%, while the pass rate for African Americans is only 56% and for Latinos 50%. A nationwide study last year by the National Academy of Sciences found racially disparate outcomes in every standardized teacher licensing exam it reviewed.

There is "a stark difference between test scores and performance evaluation" of working teachers, according to Bob Schaeffer, public education director at Fair Test, a

Cambridge-based research group that opposes high-stakes exams. A Georgia study found some correlation between grades in teacher ed programs and classroom performance, but none between performance and scores on teacher exams, while a large, seven-year study of 4,000 teachers in Fresno, California, again found zero correlation between teacher test scores and evaluations of teachers' performance.

PRAGMATIC RESPONSE

Most teacher program administrators have chosen not to wade into this debate, but to focus instead on preparing students for exams that are, at this point, inevitable. Both Lehman and Medgar Evers have upped the amount of reading and writing in required courses, with an eye toward the tests, while Medgar Evers now offers specialized prep workshops focused on the certification exam. "The important thing," says Bruni, "is that they take the exams as early as possible, so that we can use them diagnostically to provide the support they need."

Are the exams fair or a racially-biased barrier?

Welfare Fund faces financial crisis

By STEVE LONDON

PSC First Vice President
Executive Officer for Member Relations
& Planning, PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund

In the next three pages, this special section of *Clarion* will provide you with information on the financial problems confronting the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund, and the alternatives that the Fund's Trustees are considering to resolve them.

The PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund (WF) is faced with growing operating deficits. Incremental changes will not be enough to preserve our benefits. A major restructuring of WF benefits is necessary, as a result of changes affecting the Fund over the past ten years.

Two months after the PSC leadership was elected, we pressed City unions to increase our joint demands during the Municipal Labor Committee's bargaining with the City over benefits. This led to substantial new resources for the Welfare Fund: a \$350 per member cash contribution, a \$200 per member rate increase and removing costly "PICA" drugs from WF responsibility (see p. 7). We also negotiated with CUNY to retire a net \$1.5 million liability charged against the Fund, and add \$1.5 million annually to cover adjunct health insurance.

But the severity of the Fund's financial problems means that a restructuring of benefits is also re-

The roots of the problem

quired. In 2001 we set in motion an extensive and time-consuming planning process, involving the Trustees, the WF Advisory Council, a Strategic Planning Task Force, consultants from the Segal Co. and attorneys from Spivak, Lipton (among the leading firms in this field). Reports on this process appeared in the February, May and Summer issues of *Clarion*.

The WF Trustees are now inviting members to take part in a broad discussion of which changes to implement. In this issue of *Clarion*, on the PSC web site, in mailings from the Welfare Fund and at special campus meetings, you will be provided with the information you need to form an opinion and take part in a dialogue with the Trustees about the Welfare Fund's future.

The Trustees have taken some preliminary measures to stem the tide of financial losses (see pp. 6-7), but these only begin to address the Fund's financial difficulties.

THE FINANCIAL PROBLEM

For the past six years, the Fund has run an operating deficit – that is, it has spent more than it has taken in. This is in spite of a \$2.5 million cash infusion in 2000 and a substan-

tial increase in contributions to the Fund won in the new contract. Overall, the Fund ran an operating deficit for 11 out of the past 14 years. These operating deficits have been financed through periodic contributions from the Fund's reserves. But the reserve fund, once nearly \$23 million, has now dwindled to about \$7 million. With projected operating deficits of \$6 million in the current fiscal year and \$10 million by FY 2004, it is clear that if we continue to rely on our reserves, they will soon disappear.

The chart at right, "Assets vs. Deficits," demonstrates the relationship between the growing operating deficits and the spending down of the Fund's reserves. According to current projections, the WF will not have enough funds to pay for all of our benefits in the second half of 2003. Clearly changes need to be made, and soon.

This financial crisis is a result of four main factors:

1) Double-digit inflation for prescription drugs: Prescription drug premiums are the large majority of WF expenses. (See chart, at left, "Spending on Benefits.") This was not always the case. In 1990, the Fund spent \$3.5 million on prescription drugs, or 22% of Fund expenditures on benefits. By 2001, prescription drug expenses stood at \$12.3 million and accounted for 55% of all WF benefit spending. This is a 250% increase over the decade. Without changes, the Fund's prescription drug expenses will escalate to \$19.7 million in 2004, or 63% of benefit expenditures. Such increases are not sustainable.

We are not alone. Nationally, skyrocketing prescription drug costs (and drug company profits) have stressed all welfare funds. The greed of drug companies has not been countered by government action, and until there is a national health care and prescription drug financing plan in place, we will have to take the necessary actions on our own to remain solvent.

2) The PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund benefit package: While prescription drug costs were running wild, Fund Trustees did not do enough to contain costs. The early 1990s saw some limited restructuring (going to a generic-based reimbursement plan, increased co-pays and dental plan changes), but after that the benefit package was only enhanced (e.g., raising the prescription drug cap from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and lowering major medical limits).

In contrast, many other welfare plans made changes in the 1990s which either reduced benefits or encouraged members to buy cheaper

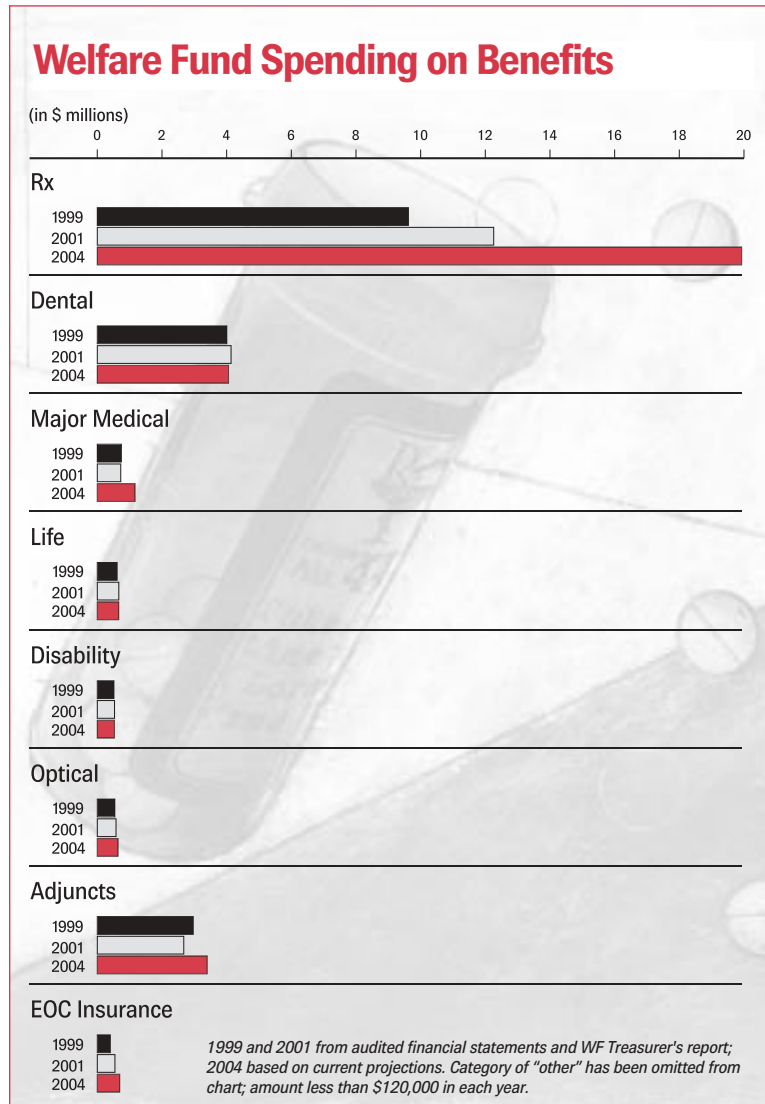
drugs. These measures included eliminating coverage for drugs available over the counter, increasing drug co-payments and establishing a preferred list of cheaper drugs known as a "formulary."

Such cost-containment measures already affect about one-fifth of our membership, who receive prescription drugs through their HMOs. They have operated under cost-containment measures for three or four years. But the four-fifths who have the NPA card have not had this experience. Had such cost-saving incentives been in place for the rest of the bargaining unit over the past five years, we would have saved millions of dollars in our reserve fund.

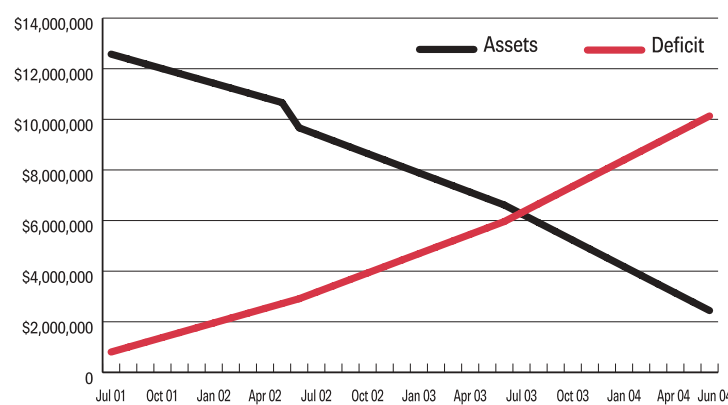
3) The reduction of full-time faculty: The Welfare Fund's revenue stream has been affected by the long-term reduction of full-time faculty. WF membership is growing older as the

1% of aggregate annual salary, was negotiated to go into the Fund to cover growing deficits. This meant that in 1994, instead of having an additional 1% increase in salary that year, the \$7 million was used to fund benefits.

While we will need to make some cash infusion in the next round of negotiations to rebuild reserves, this method of financing operating deficits has grown increasingly costly. Our payroll base has increased only marginally over time while benefit costs have exploded. In 1994, a cash infusion equal to 1% of aggregate salary covered about seven years of WF operating deficits. But today, to cover just the projected deficits of 2002 through 2004, we would need 2.5% of deferred salary. Without changes in benefit structure, we will have to devote more and more of our contractual settle-



Welfare Fund Assets vs. Deficits



active instructional staff ages and retires, the number of middle-aged members drops, and fewer younger colleagues are hired. Older active members and retirees utilize Fund benefits more than younger members. This shifting of the mix of members means that the Fund receives fewer per capita payments for members who will use relatively fewer benefits and thus subsidize those who use more.

As of October 31, 2002, the WF will receive \$1,375 per year for each active member and \$1,550 per year for most retirees. Historically, the retirees' account has run a deficit while the actives' account has been in surplus. But this year the actives' account will also show a deficit. The structural change in membership, along with inflated prescription drug costs, means that our per capita payments cannot adequately fund our current benefits.

To close the gap between revenues and expenses, the PSC has periodically negotiated cash infusions into the WF's reserves. This approach has meant deferring salary increases for a year and taking the money that would have funded one year of raises as a cash payment to the WF. In 1994, \$7 million, or about

ment to maintain current benefit levels.

4) Mix of Welfare Fund benefits: The increase in prescription drug costs has meant that many of our other benefits are underfunded. The dental plan is one major benefit that has suffered: dentists are leaving the panel because our in-network fee structure is so low.

Many members have expressed dissatisfaction with our dental plan because the benefit has grown less valuable as dentists leave our panel and reimbursements for out-of-network dental care cover less of their expenses. But with more prescription drug costs to cover, there has been no money to devote to enhanced dental benefits and the plan has continued to deteriorate.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The bottom line is that the Welfare Fund is in a crisis. Immediate action is needed to ensure that the Fund remains viable. WF Trustees have calculated that we must achieve \$6 million in annual savings.

The next two pages outline the options now under consideration. We hope you will read them closely and join in the discussion at the campus meetings this Fall.

Benefits must be restructured

The bottom line: preserving our benefits

By **STEVE LONDON**

PSC First Vice President
PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund, Executive Officer for
Member Relations & Planning

As outlined on the previous page, the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund must make significant changes in our benefit structure in order to preserve benefits for the future.

The Welfare Fund (WF) Trustees have set a target of \$6 million in annual savings, enough to cover the projected operating deficit for this year and take a big bite out of next year's projected deficit of \$10 million. But by the time these savings take effect, our reserves will have fallen dangerously low. We will have to work with other unions in the Municipal Labor Committee to win more resources for our Welfare Fund in negotiations with the City. We will also have to look at negotiating a cash infusion to the reserves in our next contract with CUNY. The WF Trustees believe these measures are not optional: they are necessary to save our benefits and place the Fund on a firm financial foundation.

Exactly how to achieve the \$6 million in savings will be decided after the Trustees hear from you. Various options are described below. They have been developed during a year of intense study by the Trustees, WF staff, the WF Advisory Council, consultants and members with expertise in this area. These proposals, however, are not exhaustive, and other ideas are welcome.

All the options that follow add up to more than the \$6 million target – so consider which benefits you think are most important to maintain. Once members have had a chance to give feedback on the possible areas for savings, the Trustees will make the necessary decisions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The WF Trustees identified two guiding principles in their approach to benefit restructuring:

1) maintain substantial equality of benefits between active and retiree members, although out-of-pocket costs may differ.

2) make the impact of the changes on our sickest and most plan-dependent members the least burdensome.

Principles, however, are often easier to articulate than apply. Do you agree with these two? If so, how should they be translated into policy? Keep these questions in mind in the upcoming discussions.

SAVINGS WITHOUT BENEFIT CHANGES

WF Trustees and the PSC leadership have looked into possible savings that do not have an impact

on benefits. In the latest round of collective bargaining, CUNY agreed to write off a \$2.5 million liability against the Fund stemming from CUNY overpayments to the Fund in the mid-1990s. (Net savings were \$1.5 million because the deal included a new \$1 million Employee Assistance Program.) The PSC leadership is continuing to discuss other areas of CUNY-WF financial arrangements that could realize additional resources for the Fund.

While the Trustees are continuing to review all aspects of Fund administration to enhance service to members, we have determined that there are few if any meaningful savings to be had in administrative operations. The WF's administration costs run at under 5% of revenues.

One area of potentially significant savings is in the discounts we receive from our Pharmaceutical Benefit Manager (PBM). We have asked for new bids from different PBMs, and we believe we may realize as much as \$1.8 million in savings without changing benefits.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS: THE BUILDING BLOCK APPROACH

Restructuring the Fund's major benefit expense, prescription drugs, is complex: savings from one measure often depend upon first restructuring another area. To simplify, we have taken a "building block" approach to presenting the following proposals (see chart, "Possible Savings on Prescription Drugs").

Possible areas for savings:

- ⊕ PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE
- ⊕ THE DENTAL PLAN
- ⊕ LIFE INSURANCE
- ⊕ MAJOR MEDICAL

The first block represents actions already taken by the WF Trustees: eliminating over-the-counter counterparts; mail order at second refill; and coverage of birth control pills (see p. 7). These measures, taken together will save **\$300,000**.

The second block is the renegotiation of the PBM contract referred to above. We expect to save an additional **\$1.8 million**.

The third block proposes instituting a three-tier formulary, adding a new list of "preferred" cheaper drugs. Right now we have a two-tier formulary: generic and brand-name prescription drugs. If an equivalent generic drug is available, then the drug plan will not pay the higher brand-name price: whichever you get, the Fund covers only an amount equal to the cost of the generic, minus your co-pay. A three-tier formulary would keep

the rules for generic versus brand-name drugs, but would add a list of "preferred" drugs in between: brand-name drugs for which the PBM has negotiated a discount. Usually this involves one of various therapeutically equivalent drugs (e.g., Claritin might be in this formulary while Allegra would not). Members would be charged the regular co-pay for drugs in the formulary, and an increased co-pay for others. If our current co-payment (\$5 or 20%, whichever is higher) is applied to formulary drugs, and \$20 or 20% (whichever is higher) to non-formulary drugs, this would save the Fund **\$760,000**.

The fourth block would implement a \$100 deductible per family for retirees only. This means that the first \$100 that the plan would otherwise pay would now be assumed by retiree members. While the benefit structure would remain the same for actives and retirees, this option would introduce a differential between actives and retirees in cost-sharing.

The rationale for this change is that retirees are heavier users of prescription drugs than actives. In 2001, the Welfare Fund spent close to \$1,000 more per retiree member than active member for prescription drugs. And active members have in effect paid extra to help maintain retiree drug benefits: when an amount equal to 1% of total annual salaries goes toward a cash infusion to bolster WF reserves, that means less money can be devoted to that year's raises. For an active member earning \$40,000, this amounts to a \$400 contribution in one year – plus the loss of compounding this money in the future. Seen from this perspective, a \$100 per family retiree deductible is a modest request of retirees that would save the Fund **\$350,000**.

The fifth block proposes increasing co-payments. Assuming a three-tier formulary, co-payments would rise to \$10 or 20%, whichever is higher, for formulary drugs and \$25 or 20% for non-formulary drugs.

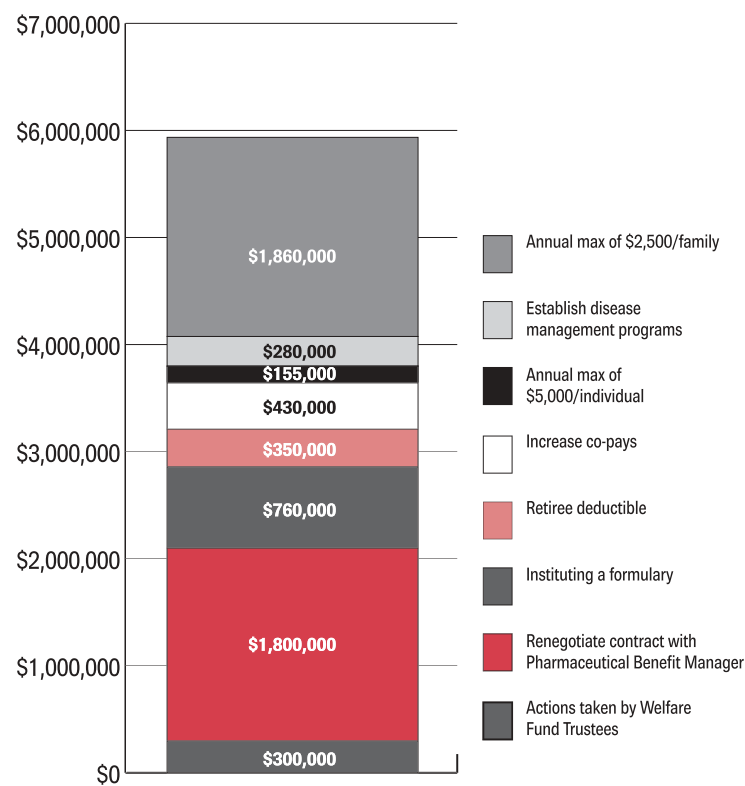
This would realize an additional savings of **\$430,000**.

The sixth block is an option that would lower the current annual maximum coverage for prescription drugs from \$10,000 per individual member to \$5,000 per individual member. The savings here would be **\$155,000**.

The seventh block involves utilization management of specific drugs tied to the treatment of certain diseases. For example, anti-ulcer medications such as Prilosec and Prevacid account for significant Fund expenditures. Manufacturers recommend that these drugs not be taken for more than three months without a doctor's specific diagnosis of a continuing problem; utilization management in this case would mean requiring such a diagnosis for the Fund to continue covering such medication beyond three months. Savings from this option are estimated at **\$280,000**.

The eighth block would cap annual prescription drug costs at \$2,500 per family. If adopted, this option would save **\$1.86 million**. If you

Possible Savings on Prescription Drugs



have been keeping score, you will notice that the previous seven proposals make substantial savings but leave us short of the \$6 million target. If we decide to take all the savings from prescription drugs and leave other benefits untouched, then we would have to resort to drastic measures like this one. However, this measure would most severely affect those who need the most prescription drugs, and so would violate the second guiding principle. Without substantial cuts in other areas, it will be difficult to maintain this principle in practice.

DENTAL PLAN

Our current dental plan costs about \$4 million per year. We cover both high-end expenses (e.g., crowns, dentures, bridges and orthodontia) and preventive, diagnostic and basic restorative expenses (e.g., exams, x-ray, fillings, and root canals). A network panel of dentists provides routine care at no cost and more expensive procedures with a \$100 co-pay. Members who use a non-panel dentist get partial reimbursement.

The main problem with our current plan is that we do not invest enough money into the fee structure to maintain a large enough panel of network dentists. Over the past five years, this panel has shrunk by 16% to 1,149 dentists.

There are different ways to save

Possible Dental Plan Changes

	If the key objective is coverage for expensive procedures:	If the key objective is coverage for the most common procedures:
Modified version of current plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase deductible to \$200 per individual & \$400 per family - in and out-of-network — \$1.6 million savings 2. No coverage for preventive, diagnostic or basic restorative services — \$1.1 million savings 3. Member only (no dependent) — \$1.5 million savings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cover preventive and diagnostic services only — \$2.7 million savings 2. Establish \$1,000 annual maximum — \$360,000 savings
New plan: discount network	Increase deductible to \$1,000; guarantee access to large discount network — \$2.5 million savings	Cover preventive and restorative services only; access to network — \$2.1 million savings

money in the dental plan and all of them mean reducing the current comprehensive level of coverage. The chart, "Possible dental plan changes" (above), details these four different approaches. These options cannot be combined with each other.

We can choose either of two key objectives, and either of two possible plans to reach them. The two objectives are: 1) covering high-end expenses, or 2) covering the most common procedures. If we decide that the most important objective is to protect against the costs of crowns, dentures, etc., then the plan would not cover more routine and common procedures, like check-ups and fillings. If we decide that top priority is to cover the more common procedures, more members will receive a benefit but those with large dental bills will not be helped.

We also have a choice between two different types of plans. The first type of plan is basically what we currently have, but without the comprehensive scope of coverage.

Alternatively, we could move to a modified discount buyers' network. Under this plan a large panel of dentists (6,000 to 8,000) would participate in a network constructed for us. Members using one of these dentists would receive a discount based on an agreed-on fee schedule. This plan could be modified by including free or low-cost access to preventive and restorative services, or by subsidizing more expensive care. Unlike our current plan, this plan would require a member to use a network dentist in order to receive a benefit.

The dental options outlined in the table above present different scenarios and how much would be saved under each. At this Fall's campus meetings, we will discuss which approach members prefer.

LIFE INSURANCE

The current life insurance benefit provides \$50,000 of coverage until age 40 and then decreases to \$5,000 by age 65. Up to \$100,000 of additional coverage can be purchased voluntarily. This program is not available to retirees. The ad-

vantage of this life insurance program is that no medical underwriting is required at the time of hiring. This means a new member cannot be disqualified because of a medical condition.

WF consultants estimate that competitive bidding could provide us with a comparable benefit at a savings of \$320,000. Another option could be to drop the underlying insurance policy and obtain voluntary access to \$250,000 of life insurance for actives up to age 65 or 70, depending on the carrier, without the necessity of medical underwriting. If this is possible, we could save the entire \$650,000 current cost to the Welfare Fund. In this case, the Trustees have discussed the possibility of adding a \$5,000 death benefit for actives. This would cost \$125,000 annually.

MAJOR MEDICAL

The Fund purchases a supplemental major medical plan from CIGNA that is available to participants enrolled in the GHI-CBP health plan. For those who purchase GHI's Optional Rider CIGNA major medical covers out-of-network expenses after meeting a deductible of \$500/individual and \$1,000/family. Without the Optional Rider, the CIGNA deductibles are \$2,000/individual and \$4,000/family. In either case, after the deductible 80% of "reasonable and customary" expenses are covered up to \$3,000, with 100% coverage thereafter up to \$1 million. All this costs the Fund \$976,000.

Members can also enroll in a contributory catastrophic medical plan (the Marsh Plan). After \$10,000 of costs (including those paid by insurance), medical, surgical and convalescent expenses are covered up to \$2 million over 10 years. Since this is voluntary, there are no Fund expenses associated with this plan.

The Trustees are seeking bids on a possible combination of the Optional Rider, Major Medical and Catastrophic plans. Many of our members currently do not understand how these three provisions work together and many do not take advantage of the CIGNA cov-

erage, so our first objective would be to rationalize the plans so coverage is easier to understand and use. In addition, cost-sharing in a combined supplemental and catastrophic plan could produce savings as high as \$500,000.

NEXT STEPS

Meetings with Fund Trustees, Welfare Fund Advisory Council Representatives, and PSC leadership will take place on campuses during September and October. In order to make these decisions, the Trustees need to hear your views:

- ⊕ Do you agree with the guiding principles formulated by the Trustees?
- ⊕ Which benefits are most important to you?
- ⊕ Are there other options that should be considered to save the Welfare Fund?
- ⊕ How much of the next collective bargaining settlement should be devoted to the Fund?

Some drug changes start October 1

On October 1, 2002, three changes take effect in the Welfare Fund's prescription drug plan:

- prescription drugs that are also available over-the-counter will no longer be covered.
- mail-order must be used starting with the second refill (the third order).
- birth control pills will no longer be excluded from coverage.

These changes were detailed in the Summer *Clarion* and in a mailing you should have received from the Welfare Fund.

If you would like another copy of the mailing, call the Welfare Fund at 212-354-5230. The *Clarion* article can also be found on the Web at www.psc-cuny.org/Summer2002Clarion.pdf.

The way you order PICA drugs (psychotropic, injectable, chemotherapy or asthma medications) will remain unchanged, since these are provided as part of your basic health insurance through the City of New York (see article below). — TG

- ⊕ How can members influence national and state health care and prescription drug policies?
- ⊕ How can members' lifestyles and patterns of use of prescription drugs be influenced to promote health and to bring down Plan costs?

Come to a meeting this Fall, and help shape the decisions that must be made.

Your basic health insurance is not affected

Your basic health insurance will not be affected by any changes in the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund. Members' basic health insurance policy, which covers hospitalization, surgery, doctor's office visits, lab tests and more, comes through the City of New York. It is provided by the carrier you have chosen — GHI/Blue Cross, HIP, Aetna/US Health Care, HealthNet, Vytra, Empire or CIGNA.

PICA DRUGS

The terms of this basic coverage are negotiated by the PSC and other municipal unions in joint bargaining with the City. Several gains were made in the last negotiations, including coverage of "PICA" drugs (psychotropic, injectable, chemotherapy and asthma medications), often with zero deductible.

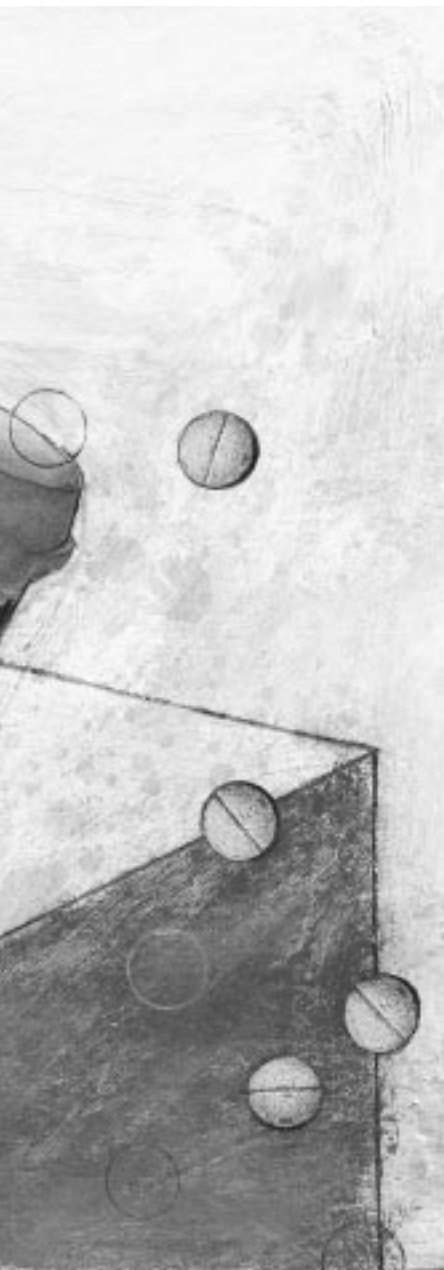
Since these drugs are now covered through the City health plan, they will not be affected by any changes

in the Welfare Fund drug benefit. Many members may not be aware that this PICA drug coverage is separate, since the same company, NPA, manages both the City's PICA program and the Welfare Fund's drug benefit.

Also unchanged will be the drug coverage for PSC members in the HIP, Aetna and CIGNA HMOs. Members who choose these programs have drug coverage through the HMO, under a separate rider.

Recent rate increases in some NYC health plans stem from negotiations between the plan and the City.

A variety of optional benefits available through our state and national affiliates, NYSUT and the AFT, will remain unaltered. NYSUT and the AFT both offer catastrophic major medical, disability, long-term care and life insurance coverage. The Welfare Fund's disability benefit is also expected to continue unchanged. — PH



David Lesh

CUNY will take part in ERI

By **CLARISSA GILBERT WEISS**
PSC Director of Pension & Welfare Benefits

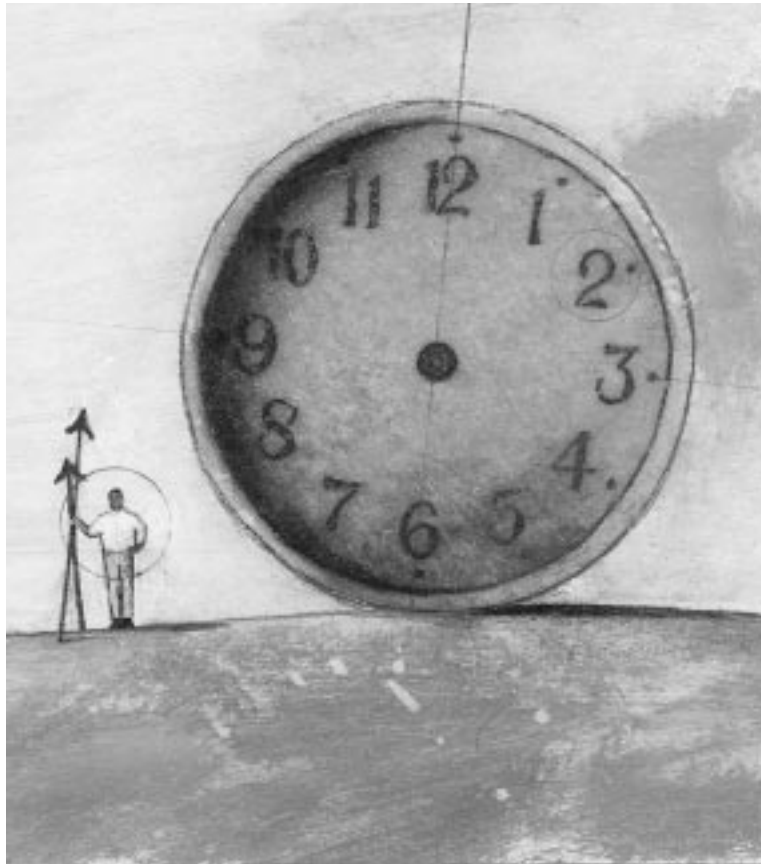
CUNY will take part in a new Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) for eligible full-time faculty and professional staff. To participate, you must file certain forms no later than early January.

All titles in the PSC's bargaining unit will be included. This has been the case in every other ERI in recent memory, but this time it was not something to take for granted. While the Board's June 24 resolution included all full-time faculty titles in the ERI, it stated that "other titles eligible to participate will be determined by the Chancellor." In other words, certain professional staff titles could be excluded.

The PSC fought hard to have all instructional staff titles without exception included in the ERI. The CLT and HEO chapter chairs and the union's president all wrote to Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, expressing their strong concern. "We feel that the exclusion of any employees in [CLT or HEO] titles would be divisive, discriminatory and demoralizing," wrote CLT Chapter Chair Shelly Mendlinger. "Our members," wrote HEO Chapter Chair Jean Weisman, "deserve equal recognition for their contributions to the University."

Just after Labor Day, Chancellor Goldstein announced that all PSC bargaining unit titles would in fact be included in the ERI. "We're thrilled. The Chancellor had the courage to do exactly the right thing; he recognized how important it is to be inclusive," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "CLTs and HEOs have been a mainstay

All faculty and professional staff titles included



David Lesh

YOUR BENEFITS

of the University, and we're glad to see all their years of hard work acknowledged."

WHO QUALIFIES

In addition to being a full-time member of the instructional staff, to be eligible for the 2002 ERI you must:

- be at least 50 years of age and have 10 years of continuous full-time service as of January 28, 2003. (If you have been on sabbatical leave during Spring 2002 or Fall 2002 you must receive a waiver of the requirement that you return for one year after sabbatical leave.)

- have worked continuously since February 1, 2002. (In most cases, taking unpaid leave since February 1 would make you ineligible.)

The official open enrollment period for the ERI is October 31 to January 28, but in fact two key forms must be filed by early January or you will be ineligible.

The form notifying CUNY of your intent to participate must be filed by Tuesday, January 7th, 2003 at CUNY's Office of Faculty and Staff Relations, where it will be dated and time-stamped. Your application to the retirement system must be filed no later than Tuesday, January 14th. Both forms should be available on campus by the end of September; instructions on how and where to file are included.

If you take the ERI, your last day on the payroll will be January 27th, which will also be the last day on which you can revoke your decision to retire. This must be done in person at CUNY's benefits office and the office of the retirement system.

For those in TRS (or the NYC Employees or Board of Education Retirement Systems), the incentive has been broken up into two parts, Part A and Part B. Part A is for all TRS members who are in Tiers I, II, III

and IV. This incentive gives an additional one month of service credit for each year up to a maximum of 36 additional months. For members in Tiers I and II this incentive is in addition to the two years of service credit previously approved by the Legislature. Part B, which applies to far fewer PSC members, is only for those in Tiers II, III or IV between the ages of 55 and 62 with at least 25 but less than 30 years of service. Under Part B, the onerous reduction that occurs in your pension because you are not 62 is eliminated. Part A and Part B cannot be combined.

OPTIONAL RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

For members of the optional retirement system (TIAA/CREF, Guardian or Met Life) the ERI takes the form of an additional employer contribution to their plan. This is a percentage of their 10/1/02 salary, including contractual increases, multiplied by their years of full-time pensionable employment at CUNY. The formula is $\frac{1}{12} \times (\text{years of service}) \times 15\% \times (10/1/02 \text{ salary})$. The incentive payment will be contributed to your TIAA/CREF retirement annuity up to the maximum allowed under the IRS Code (100% of salary or \$40,000, whichever is less). Any contributions in excess of that limit will be contributed to your Salary Reduction Agreement (SRA, also called "deferred comp") to the extent allowed by the IRS Code. If you do not have an SRA, one will be opened up for you.

Members who take the ERI will still receive payment for their unused annual and Travia leave balances, which will be made in three equal installments. All Travia and annual leave balances are completely taxable.

The incentive does not change the requirements for continuation of health benefits after retirement. In general, the basic rule for after-retirement health benefits is that you must be receiving a pension in order to qualify. There can be other requirements as well; check with your campus personnel office for details.

If taking the ERI would leave you with a gap in health coverage, you can pay to continue your current coverage through COBRA for up to 18 months. After that you would need to find a new policy. Again, check with your personnel office on available options.

I will be traveling to each CUNY campus this fall to discuss the ERI. The PSC also has pension counselors available for individual appointments: to set up an appointment, call the PSC at 212-354-1252 and ask for the Office of Pension and Welfare Fund Benefits.

New law could change your pension tier status

A new law allows a change in pension tier status for eligible members of the Teachers Retirement System who were previously employed by the New York City Board of Education as regular substitute teachers. This will mean better retirement benefits for many members.

To qualify, you must have been a regular substitute for a period of not less than 20 days during a school year, in a position expected to be vacant for that year. If you qualify, you will be entitled to the rights in effect for TRS members on the first day of your regular substitute teaching service.

If you are now on Travia leave, please call the PSC office immediately to discuss your status with Clarissa Gilbert Weiss, Director of

Pension and Welfare Benefits at 212-354-1252.

If you file the request to change your pension tier in conjunction with your retirement, you must file both a retirement application for your existing tier and a retirement application for the new tier for which you may be eligible, based on your new TRS membership date.

The "Filing Intent Form" is available from TRS. You can access this form by logging on to the TRS Website at www.trs.nyc.ny.us or by calling the TRS member services center at (888) 8-NYC-TRS and selecting Option 1: the TRS service line.

Even if you are not retiring this year, if you want to change your tier status you must submit your request by June 30, 2003. —CGW

CALENDAR

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 / 9 am-5 pm: Global Justice conference. Topics include the WTO, globalization, gender and work. Keynote Speakers: Stanley Aronowitz, Calvin Butts and Lori Wallach. Organized by Northeast Scholars for Global Justice. At House of the Redeemer, 7 E. 95th St., NYC. For more information, call 212-563-1409.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 / 6 pm: Labor Goes to the Movies. The PSC continues the second year of its successful film series with "Our Secret Century," including a Q & A with director Rick Prelinger. At the City College Center for Worker Education, 99 Hudson St. For more information, call 212-354-1252 or go to www.psc-cuny.org.

MONDAYS, STARTING SEPTEMBER 23 / Should you take advantage of the Early Retirement Incentive? Counseling for TRS members will be available Mondays (except holidays) through Jan. 13. By appointment only. Call Linda Slifkin at 212-354-1252 to reserve a time.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 / Should you take advantage of the ERI? Counseling for TIAA-CREF members, by appointment only. Call Linda Slifkin at 212-354-1252 to make an appointment.

SEPTEMBER 26 – 28 / Labor's Voices/LaborTech Conference: "Democratic Media and Organizing in Uncertain Times." Speakers include PSC members Stanley Aronowitz, Barbara Bowen, Blanche Wiesen Cook, Bill Friedheim, Juan Gonzalez, Bill Henning, Steve London, Manny Ness. See ad, page 9, for details.

OCTOBER 7 – 11 / Union Blood Drive Week, sponsored by NYC Central Labor Council. To make an appointment to donate, call Dale Nussbaum, 212-604-9552, x219 or go to www.nyclc.org.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9 / Retirement counseling for TIAA-CREF members, by appointment only. Call Linda Slifkin at 212-354-1252.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11 / Labor Goes to the Movies. Screening of "Harvest 3000 Years." At the City College Center for Worker Education, 99 Hudson St. For more information, call 212-354-1252 or check the Web at www.psc-cuny.org.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22 / Retirement counseling for TIAA-CREF members, by appointment only. Call Linda Slifkin at 212-354-1252.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26 / 9 am-5 pm: "Education, Globalization, War: Public Education in the Americas" conference, sponsored by the PSC. How is globalization affecting access to education, governance, curriculum, faculty/staff recruitment and work conditions? At BMCC. For more information, call 212-662-0934 or e-mail rbriden1@juno.com.

Higher Ed Act, war & peace

PSC helps shape AFT policy and debate

By PETER HOGNESS

For a group that represents 20,000 workers, the PSC had an unusually large impact on the convention of the million-member American Federation of Teachers.

Due to the record number of resolutions submitted this year, the time allotted for committee meetings had to be more than doubled. One-fifth of those resolutions came from the PSC, and most of its proposals were adopted. The results will influence the AFT's stand on higher education issues, civil rights and our members' health for the next two years. A PSC resolution on war, peace and terrorism was defeated but drew support from about a third of the AFT's 3,700 delegates.

The PSC's main focus was a series of resolutions on the upcoming renewal of the federal Higher Education Act (HEA). "The other higher ed locals were grateful that we had done the work to develop these proposals," said PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall, "We had very strong support." The PSC's top priority was to introduce a new idea: special federal support for public higher education institutions in states with high immigrant populations.

The HEA proposals had been under development for more than a year, and the AFT leadership backed the PSC's key HEA resolution as one

of the three top priorities for higher education. The AFT's other two priorities for higher ed, which the PSC supported, were to strengthen shared governance and work for equitable treatment for adjuncts.

Loan forgiveness for public college graduates who agree to teach in poor communities was another PSC proposal for the HEA, and the

The top PSC priority was federal support for higher ed in states with high immigrant populations.

convention adopted this as well. "People were pleasantly surprised that we had put this forward," said PSC delegate Bob Cermele. "They figured it's not a higher ed issue, so why should your members care? I told them our students are the ones who will be

affected, so for us it's a natural concern." The convention also supported a PSC proposal for HEA funding of childcare for college students, faculty and staff.

HEA funding of efforts to promote diversity in the recruitment of faculty, professional staff and graduate students was proposed in two other PSC resolutions, both of which were approved. But a PSC resolution calling for HEA funding to be contingent on "recruiting, hiring and promoting faculty and staff representing the diverse pool of qualified candidates" did not pass; instead, it was unexpectedly referred to the AFT Executive Council. PSC delegate Samuel Farrell, who chairs the PSC's Diversity Committee, said he felt the ob-



Michael Campbell

PSC Health & Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum speaks at the AFT National Convention in Las Vegas.

jections raised were not substantive. "It seemed that the real issues remained hidden underneath the surface of our discussion," Farrell said.

"There was the *huge* support for our resolution on indoor air quality," noted McCall. When PSC delegate and Health and Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum asked for delegates who suffered from respiratory problems at work to raise their hands, close to a third of them went up. "When I asked who had co-workers with these problems, most of the rest went up as well," Greenbaum told *Clarion*. "This seems to be a problem that people have been suffering with quietly for a long time," said McCall, "and now it's a priority for AFT action."

Also approved was a PSC resolution that strongly commits the AFT to the defense of immigrants' rights. An amendment offered by a delegate from Florida that would have ruled out support for undocumented immigrants was defeated three-to-two in committee. PSC proposals on social security, housing and tax policy were also adopted, as was a PSC-

supported resolution on prescription drugs offered by the PSC's state affiliate, NYSUT.

On war and peace, the AFT Executive Council put forward a resolution that expressed strong support for the Bush Administration's "war on terrorism," stating, "We have no doubt that military action will be required more than once in the coming years and that the costs will be great." NYSUT President Tom Hobarb spoke in its support, arguing that these actions were necessary, as the AFT EC resolution stated, "to minimize the possibility of future attacks and to defend the world's democracies."

TWO RESOLUTIONS

"If ever there was a just war, this is it!" said UFT delegate Leo Casey.

Casey recalled his own opposition to the war in Vietnam but said that the Bush Administration's "war on terrorism" is legitimate because it is "a war of self-defense." This war is not about corporate interests, Casey said, arguing that "there is no oil in Afghanistan."

PSC President Barbara Bowen introduced the PSC's resolution as a substitute, in order to make sure that it would be considered on the convention floor. She noted that both resolutions shared a strong condemnation of the September 11 terrorist attacks and expressed solidarity with victims and with rescue workers. But, she said, the PSC could not support the AFT EC resolution because it offered a "blank check" to the Bush Administration. This was a mistake, she argued, especially "now that we've heard Bush saying that this will be a war of 40 to 50 years, when we have heard Cheney say that it may involve 40 to 50 countries."

'EVER-EXPANDING WAR'

The AFT EC resolution "sanctions an ever-expanding war against an ill-defined enemy," said PSC First Vice President Steve London. This will "alienate us from the world community [and] have adverse consequences at home," said London. "Such a policy will not make us more secure." Instead, London said, we should combine concrete security measures with a drive to "make the US a force for democracy and human rights around the world."

The AFT EC resolution passed by about two-to-one, with the PSC resolution drawing far more support than had been anticipated. "I think this was tremendously important," said PSC delegate Janice Cline. "I think the debate will make people look at future events more closely."

On the last day of the convention, the PSC hosted a roundtable breakfast discussion on high-stakes standardized tests. The event drew about 50 people, about half of them from locals in K-12, and the emphasis was on sharing of experience. "I think people were very enthusiastic about having a forum in which they could have this conversation," said PSC delegate Marc Ward.

A CONFERENCE BY

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Democratic Media and Organizing in Uncertain Times

Sept. 26-28, 2002 New York City

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Democratic Media: Where is Labor's Voice?

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Ellen Frank, *Dollars and Sense*, Center for Popular Economics

Juan Gonzalez, Journalist and Activist

Raj Jayadev, Silicon Valley Organizer

Denise Mitchell, Director of Public Affairs, National AFL-CIO

Robert McChesney, Professor, University of Illinois

David Montgomery, Labor Historian, Yale University

*Partial listing

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS:

Opening reception, Thursday evening 6:30 PM at the Graduate Center, CUNY 365 5th Avenue at 34th Street. Featuring Elizabeth Faue, signing her new book, *Writing the Wrongs: Eva Velesh and the Rise of Labor Journalism*, and Moe Foner's recently published memoir, *Not for Bread Alone*.

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HIGHER ED IN BRIEF

Academic freedom under fire

The University of South Florida (USF) filed a complaint in a Florida court in August to seek approval to terminate Professor Sami Al-Arian. USF, citing federal investigations of Al-Arian's alleged ties to terrorist activities, claims that Al-Arian is "using academic freedom as a shield to cover improper activities." The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) charged that USF has violated

widely recognized standards of academic freedom in the case. The AAUP said that USF has bypassed established faculty review procedures to try Al-Arian "by the board of trustees and in the media."

UMass reneges on raises

The acting governor of Massachusetts vetoed \$29.6 million in raises for UMass faculty and administrators in late July. Faculty were incensed by the decision, which would void a contract signed last summer that provides for 5% salary increases as of July 1, 2001, 2002 and 2003. Some faculty questioned whether university management had a role in the gover-

nor's decision. UMass faculty unions are organizing legal actions and mass protests to force the state to honor the contract.

Berkeley strike

Clerical workers and lecturers at UC Berkeley held short strikes at the beginning of classes in August. Lecturers, who walked out for one day, are demanding job security. They have been without a contract for more than two years. Clerical workers, who held a three-day strike, say the University offer of a 1.5% wage increase for next year is unacceptable. Both groups are part of state-wide bargaining units, which have yet to strike.

CUNY and the health of cities

By NICHOLAS FREUDENBERG

The movement of people from countryside to cities marks one of the most dramatic trends of the last century. At the beginning of the 20th century, less than a quarter of the world's population lived in urban areas. By the century's end, more than half the world's population – 3.3 billion people – were urban residents, and in the coming decades this proportion will continue to rise. In the United States, 80% of the population now lives in metropolitan areas, in cities and their surrounding suburbs.

Urbanization poses daunting health challenges in both the developed and the developing world. In poor nations, failure to provide clean water and sanitation to urban residents is still the primary cause of death and illness. In rich and poor nations, cities are the epicenter of epidemics of HIV infection, violence and drug abuse. Growing income inequalities, inadequate health and social services and air pollution threaten the well-being of urban residents, especially among vulnerable populations such as the homeless, recent immigrants and poor children. Public health experts are once again concerned that the physical form of cities may contribute to health problems, from excess deaths during heat waves to obesity.

LEADERSHIP LOST

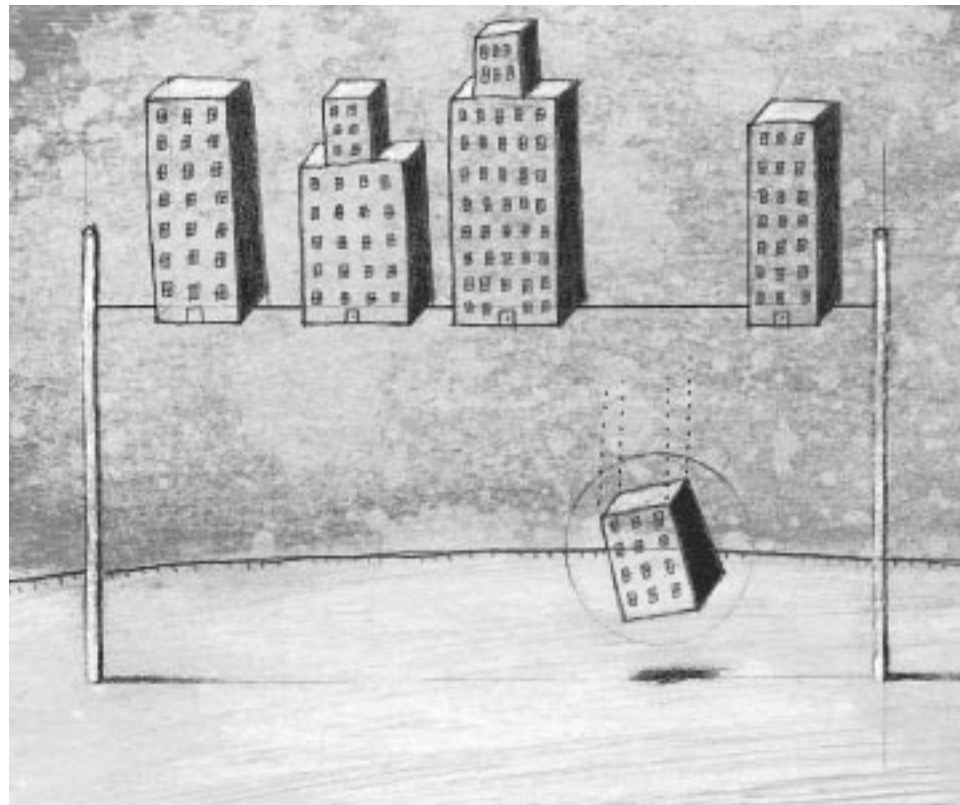
Since its founding, New York City has been both the source of the nation's greatest health problems and the birthplace of public health innovation. In the mid-19th century, New York had among the worst urban conditions in the world, with crowded housing, epidemics of infectious disease, garbage-filled streets and dangerous jobs. A century of activism and professional development in public health led to significant advances. By 1950, New York City had become an international leader in urban public health, creating model infant feeding, tuberculosis control, school health and visiting nurse programs, and a system of neighborhood health centers.

Unfortunately, in the last 25 years NYC's leadership role has eroded. Sharp cuts in health services after the 1975 fiscal crisis contributed to the resurgence of TB, gonorrhea and congenital syphilis, diseases that had been on the decline. New threats like HIV infection and the widespread availability of crack cocaine devastated communities throughout the city and strained the city's already fragile health and social service systems.

By the late 1990s, the city had regained the capacity to respond to some crises. A well-planned and expensive program brought the epidemic of TB under control, and a comprehensive childhood asthma control program appears to be reducing the city's high rates of asthma hospitalization.

But whether the city is prepared for the challenges of the new century remains an open question. A growing city fiscal crisis, a battered public health infrastructure, emerging vulnerable populations (e.g., people leaving welfare, recent immigrants, those returning from jail or prison), the threat of natural or human disasters and the persistence of the highest income inequality in the nation leave many public

A faculty-led initiative breaks new ground



health experts worried about New York City's future.

dentists to move on to PhD programs, and for doctoral students to take electives in public health. At a recent CUHC meeting with employers, several public and nonprofit agencies expressed their enthusiasm for the initiative and their willingness to collaborate, citing the difficulties they currently face in filling research positions that require both technical and organizational skills.

CUNY faculty have significant expertise in urban health. A recent survey of 68 of the most active Urban Health Collaborative faculty participants found that they were based on 10 CUNY campuses in 12 departments, and had published more than 550 articles and won 289 grants since 1996. Common research interests included chronic diseases, mental health and HIV infection – among New York's most persistent health problems.

CROSS-CAMPUS, CROSS-DISCIPLINE

More broadly, the CUHC illustrates one model for organizational change within CUNY. Faculty have led the initiative with administrators and staff participating as equal partners. The Collaborative has been able to work across campuses and disciplines by emphasizing shared passion and intellectual interests rather than institutional structures. At the same time, the CUHC has faced the same problems as CUNY as a whole. Even supportive administrators have limited resources to offer and their attention is often diverted by political crises. The CUNY culture and organizational structure often discourages cross-campus or cross-disciplinary activities, requiring strong personal motivation to overcome these barriers. The innovative research projects needed to understand complex urban health problems, and make headway against them, require a lot of time

Within academia, global urbanization, urban epidemics and recognition of the health problems associated with urban sprawl have created renewed interest in urban health. In the last few years, institutions such as John Hopkins University, University of Michigan, the New York Academy of Medicine, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have created new units to study the health of urban populations. These new efforts share common principles:

- a recognition of the limits of traditional, single-discipline approaches to analyzing what determines health in complex urban environments.
- the value of multi-level ecological models.
- the importance of involving community residents, health workers and policy makers in all stages of research.
- the need to move beyond research to intervention and action that will lead to real improvements in health and living conditions.

What does all this have to do with the City University of New York? CUNY has unique resources to offer to urban health research and practice and it has already made important contributions. With more than 100 health degree programs, CUNY educates more people for work in health care, NYC's largest job sector, than any other institution. Its students live and work in the communities facing the most serious health problems. And CUNY research centers at several campuses are in the forefront of urban health research.

In the last four years, several programs at CUNY have defined new roles for addressing the health problems of the 21st century city. In 1999, for example, Hunter College transformed its public health program into

the first U.S. accredited program to focus on preparing public health professionals to promote health and prevent disease in diverse urban communities. In 2000, faculty and staff from Brooklyn and Hunter Colleges and the Graduate Center created the CUNY Urban Health Collaborative (CUHC), an association of faculty, administrators, staff and students with interests in urban health. Its mission was to strengthen teaching, research and service on urban health by transcending disciplinary and campus borders. By bringing

CUNY educates more people for work in health care, NYC's largest job sector, than any other institution.

together researchers, health professionals and social scientists from throughout CUNY, the CUHC hoped to create the academic breadth needed to analyze and act against the complex problems that particularly plague urban residents, such as asthma, depression, diabetes, HIV, obesity or substance abuse.

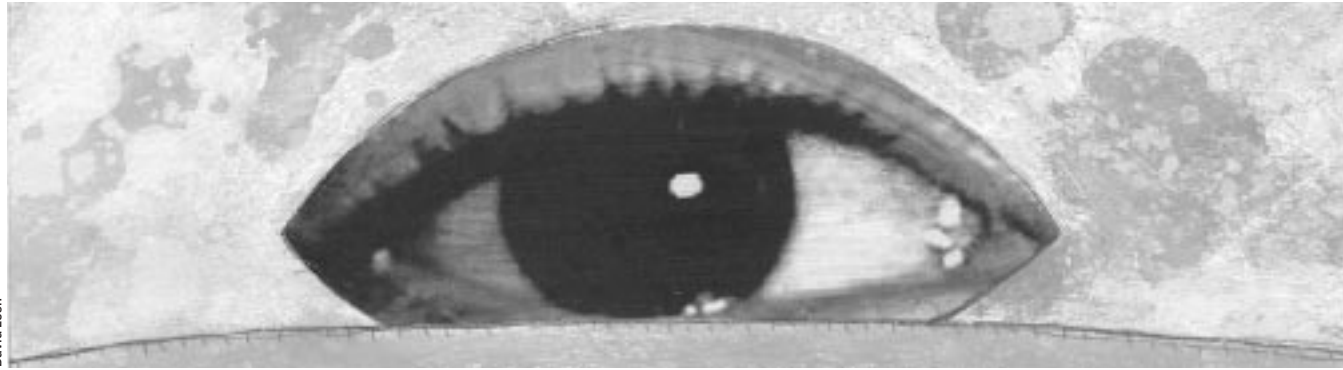
PREPARING RESEARCHERS

In the last two years, CUHC has sponsored several scientific meetings, including forums on cancer in minority communities, community participation in research, and public health lessons at six months after September 11. A workforce development grant has supported the establishment of pathways between CUNY's Masters in Public Health programs at Brooklyn and Hunter with Graduate Center PhD programs in social sciences. This initiative will prepare researchers equipped to work across disciplines in the study of public health problems of diverse urban communities, developing strong organizational and research skills. It will make it possible for qualified MPH stu-

– time that is in short supply for faculty faced with heavy teaching loads and the compelling needs of students.

In the coming years, the Urban Health Collaborative will search for more ways that CUNY can help return New York City to its leadership position in public health research and practice. The group plans to offer new multi-campus courses, to expand its reach to CUNY's community colleges, to find new ways to involve students and develop more multi-disciplinary, multi-campus research projects. Its success will depend on finding new ways to sustain faculty involvement, win ongoing support from administrators, and nurture the unique role that CUNY can play in research and action on urban health.

Nicholas Freudenberg is Distinguished Professor of Public Health at Hunter College and a member of Hunter's PSC-CUNY Executive Committee. For more information on the CUHC, write to him at nfreuden@hunter.cuny.edu or to Professor Susan Saegert at ssaegert@gc.cuny.edu.



David Lesh

ACCESS & RENEWAL

A CUNY Renaissance

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

As the first semester of the new contract gets under way, I hope you have begun to feel a difference in your life at CUNY. Salaries are up, back pay should be in hand, thousands of adjuncts are being paid for office hours, grad students receive increased tuition support, and untenured classroom faculty can begin to plan their re-assigned time for research. Meanwhile, counselors should make use of the new time available for professional leaves, retirees should request their library cards, and HEOs and CLTs should apply for professional development funds. Don't hold back – use all the improvements so we can build on them in the future. And bear with us as we work with management to ensure that the new provisions are implemented smoothly.

If the contract gains generate a feeling of solidarity for us as a union, we may need to draw on that reserve in the coming year. The budget deficits of both City and State – caused by years of regressive fiscal policy, and only compounded by September 11 – will be doubly visited on us at CUNY. The shortfalls will affect the climate for collective bargaining; they will also make our annual struggle for budget increases from Albany more intense. But neither battle is unwinnable, and the last round of negotiations proved that we can make breakthroughs at CUNY if we set our sights high and engage in collective action.

More immediately, we face painful choices this year if we are to preserve the vital benefits offered by the Welfare Fund. Welfare funds across the country are facing the same dilemma, created primarily by the soaring cost of prescription drugs – and the lack of a sane national healthcare policy. The problem for us is especially urgent, because our Fund has

been operating at a deficit for a decade and the union's previous leadership did not do enough to address it. Now responsible action has been taken: this issue of *Clarion* offers a full account of the problem and the proposals we have developed in response. Restructuring benefits isn't easy for any union, but I'm confident that the PSC is now strong enough to weather this storm and emerge with a Fund that continues to support our health.

This fall also brings a review of the CUNY Master Plan by the New York State Board of Regents. Since January 1999 when CUNY ended its long-standing practice of offering remedial courses at the senior colleges, the University has been enjoying a minor love-affair with the press. The same newspapers that a few years ago were carrying front-page headlines screaming "F for CUNY" are now filled with stories about CUNY's resurgence, its attractiveness to honors students, its success with test scores.

MYTH AND REALITY

The positive coverage is wonderful and long overdue – but can't we applaud the real advances at CUNY without buying into the myth that the University needed to be "saved" from its own students? Do we have to pretend that Open Admissions was a failure, some sort of new Dark Ages, in order to enjoy the current Renaissance? I think not. The truth is that there has always been superb teaching and learning at CUNY, and that many of the students needing remedial classes have gone on to do astonishing intellectual work.

In my own field, Renaissance literature, one of the most influential contributions in the last 25 years was a 1977 article by Joan Kelly-Gadol entitled "Did Women Have a Renaissance?" Kelly-Gadol not only shows that European women in the 15th and 16th centuries did not have a Renaissance; she suggests that our usual notions of historical peri-

ods are based primarily on the experience of men, and a small group of men at that. History would be divided up differently if we privileged the experience of women, non-Europeans – or considered everyone equally.

Something similar might be said about CUNY. Without for a moment denying the real gains of recent years – most important the addition of brilliant young colleagues – we must still ask whose experience the idea of a CUNY renaissance represents. An August article in the *New York Times* reported that the effect of eliminating remediation on the racial and ethnic composition of the student body has been "neutral." More detailed research, however, suggests otherwise. Professor Bill Crain of City College and Sandra Del Valle of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund show that the introduction of a new layer of testing requirements for admission disproportionately excludes African-American and Hispanic students.

A renaissance that leaves out whole categories of people is not good enough for CUNY, with its historical mission of openness. Improving average test scores by eliminating the students who have the lowest test scores doesn't take much imagination. What does require imagination – and political courage – is rebuilding a university that is both resurgent and open. That's not a pipe dream: we have a unique opportunity right now, with a strong new contract in place and a *rapprochement* with the press, to reopen CUNY's doors while maintaining and even enhancing its quality. Part of Kelly-Gadol's point is that Europe's spectacular Renaissance would have been even richer if women had been allowed to participate in public life. CUNY would be richer, too – intellectually, not just ethically – if its Board of Trustees had the vision to make access the centerpiece of the CUNY miracle, Part Two. That would be a renaissance worth celebrating.

SOLIDARITY

Building the ties that bind

By **JIM PERLSTEIN**
PSC Solidarity Committee

Our union's success depends in significant measure on outside support. How do we win the backing of the public and hold on to it? Solidarity work – support for the struggles of community groups, our sister unions, our students, support for causes near and sometimes far – is an important part of the answer. It's a way to win friends and influence people.

Of course, solidarity is also a *mitzvah*, a good work, an end in itself. But it's fundamentally a matter of self-interest. Start with the truism that what goes around, comes around. We support them, they support us. Less obvious but just as true: as we broaden and deepen our understanding of the meaning of "union," we strengthen ourselves internally.

But calls for our support seem to increase geometrically. There isn't the money, there aren't the bodies nor the hours in the day to respond to every urgent (and worthy) request. We can try to be selective, but making such choices on an ad hoc basis still doesn't cut it. We end up jumping back and forth, without a clear and specific relationship to the PSC's own agenda.

ENGAGED AND ACTIVE

Yet all of us are pressed and stressed. How can we make our efforts more effective?

For starters, the PSC is blessed with a membership with higher than average social consciousness and political engagement. Individuals, informal groups and some of our chapters are already collaborating with community groups, students and other campus unions on a range of issues. The PSC has relationships with existing solidarity organizations such as the Central Labor Council, the Coalition of Unions in Public Education, the NY State Labor-Religion Coalition, Jobs with Justice and more. But we still need to integrate all our disparate commitments into a strategy for solidarity work that is more than a rationalization after the fact.

The PSC Solidarity Committee is persuaded that, in the long run, our best hope lies in organizing based on the campuses. There's much to be said for Tip O'Neill's oft-quoted remark that "All politics is local." Our own experience suggests that what works best is what's most immediate and personal. Projects with potential allies where we work, where our contacts tend to be richest, seem to be the most politically coherent and fit best with the constraints on our time and energies. The PSC has already waged some campaigns that partly embody this approach, such as overturning CUNY's tuition hike for undocumented immigrant students.

And we've got ready-made models for more: organizing the unorganized in cafeterias and bookstores; support for students on welfare; "living wage" campaigns for all campus workers; and struggles for restoration of developmental courses and against high-stakes testing, to name just a few.

But it is also true that many PSC members are involved in community, labor or political organizing that is not currently connected to the work of the PSC – and yet could be. Are there ways that these activists and the union could better coordinate our work?

There are a host of other unresolved questions. Do we view less as more, and focus on one or two campaigns? Or do we let a thousand flowers bloom? How do we coordinate the work of chapters with each other, and with the rest of the PSC? Is solidarity work best conceived as the work of a committee of dedicated activists – or as an obligation broadly shared, like voting in union elections?

This article doesn't add up to a blueprint, just the beginning of a discussion. The Solidarity Committee welcomes your input – at our monthly meetings, in a letter to *Clarion*, or by e-mail to jperlstein@AOL.com.

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One year after September 11

BMCC reflects and remembers

By TOMIO GERON

The end of the Spring 2002 semester was welcome for Tricia Lin, assistant professor of English at BMCC.

Like many BMCC faculty and staff, Lin was intensely busy all through the school year, getting students – and herself – through the trauma of attending school just blocks from Ground Zero. Five BMCC students died on September 11.

“We didn’t have a pause to think for the whole year,” says Lin. Like many faculty, she incorporated discussions of 9/11 into her classes. “At the end of the year I felt more tired than ever. Not physically, but psychologically.”

All of CUNY was deeply affected by the disaster. Seven members of the instructional staff lost their lives. More broadly, teaching, learning and ways of thinking were altered throughout the University in countless ways. But BMCC, located just blocks north of the World Trade Center, was hit hardest, and it did not reopen until October 1.

DIFFICULT MEMORIES

For many at BMCC, coming back to a media-saturated anniversary will bring back difficult emotions. “The anniversary is going to be hard. It will bring up a lot of feelings, a lot of memories,” says Cheryl Fish, an assistant professor of English who also lives near BMCC. “But it’s very individual what people feel.”

Ron Hayduk, an assistant professor of social science whose classroom windows looked down onto



As the Fall 2002 semester began, Borough of Manhattan Community College was more crowded than ever.

Ground Zero last Fall, was deeply affected. “I didn’t realize until weeks later that I was going through some classic symptoms of trauma,” says Hayduk.

But even with the somber remembrances at the start of the semester, many look forward to the prospect of a new year. “We’re ready to have a fresh start,” says Lin. It’s about honoring those lost, she says, but also reflecting on the future. “When we commemorate, it’s not just about the dead, it’s about the living.”

Lin has planned an open-mike reading for the evening of Septem-

ber 11, with current and former students and other writers. BMCC’s official plans have called for a relatively low-key commemoration of the anniversary, focusing on the unveiling of a plaque describing the effects of 9/11 on BMCC.

A year after the terrorist attack, recovery at BMCC – as in the rest of lower Manhattan – is a work in progress. A walk through campus quickly reveals that space is still one of the most pressing issues because of the loss of BMCC’s Fiterman Hall, located one block from Ground Zero. Student and faculty lounges and the

cafeteria are still being used for classrooms. Temporary classroom buildings will be used again this fall. The trucks and barges filled with rubble from the World Trade Center are no longer right next door. But like much of the landscape in and around BMCC, the temporary buildings are still reminders.

Most faculty in these temporary classrooms were adjuncts like Shirley Rausher. “The air quality walking to and from classes was very difficult,” she says. “And it was very noisy, inside and out, with the dumping taking place.” A number of

her students dropped out, including one with severe asthma. “But she was persistent and completed her incompletes in the Spring,” Rausher recalls. “That speaks to the quality of our students.”

After 9/11, BMCC moved some classes uptown to City College. BMCC now plans to keep running courses there “for the foreseeable future,” says spokesperson Lou Anne Bulik. In August, the college leased new space from the downtown campus of St. John’s University, near BMCC. Scott Anderson, BMCC’s Vice President for Administration and Finance, hopes to find more space, but says the 13 St. John’s classrooms will be a big help. “We’ll continue to look for spaces to build out or move into,” says Anderson. “It’s very distressing that [students] are standing up to eat because there’s nowhere for them to sit.”

The loss of Fiterman – officials still haven’t decided if it will be repaired or demolished – meant 370,000 square feet of space lost for a campus that was already one of CUNY’s most overcrowded before 9/11. “BMCC is in need of 500,000 square feet right now,” says Anderson.

While emotional, physical and economic strains led some students to stop attending classes last Fall, the next semester BMCC had its largest Spring enrollment ever.

Last year Lamin Conteh was laid off from work and couldn’t afford to continue school. Conteh, who came to the US from Gambia five years ago, had to drop out after the cosmetics company he worked for was hit by the recession. Since then Conteh has logged 12 to 14 hour days selling books on midtown streets.

Now that he has steadied his finances, Conteh is going back to BMCC this Fall to pursue his goal of becoming a nurse. “I’m so eager. School’s all I’ve got,” he says. “That’s the number one priority for me.”

Lead & depression

Health concerns at BMCC after 9/11

By CLARION STAFF

In late June and early July, an environmental testing firm found elevated lead concentrations in the air intakes and return ducts at BMCC. H. A. Bader Consultants recommended that the college “clean all HVAC [Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning] systems and ductwork in the building,” and the administration has agreed to do so.

In June the PSC had written to BMCC administration to urge testing of the school’s HVAC system, noting that elevated lead levels had been found in the air ducts at Stuyvesant High School nearby. “Cleaning the ducts is something we have argued for since just after September 11,” PSC Health and Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum told *Clarion*.

EPA guidelines commonly used for residences allow for lead levels

of up to 40 micrograms per square foot for floors, 250 for interior window sills and 400 for window troughs. While these amounts were not exceeded in occupied areas of BMCC, levels within and outside of the air ducts were often far higher.

At outside air intake portals, lead levels as high as 4,000 mcg/ft² were found. High-efficiency filters kept most of this lead dust outside the building, but some lead apparently circulated within the duct system. Up to 360 mcg was found at return fans.

SOURCE UNCLEAR

“Lead contamination has frequently been identified in Trade Center-related dust,” according to Howard Bader, the environmental consultant who conducted the tests. But it is not clear whether the lead in BMCC’s air system is a direct result of the World Trade Center’s collapse, or is mainly

due to a build-up of lead in the air over the last 20 years.

There are no EPA standards for lead in air duct systems. “We don’t have a lead contamination issue in our HVAC system,” maintained Scott Anderson, BMCC’s Vice President for Administration and Finance. “But we’ve decided that we do want to clean the vents. It’s what you breathe, and we’re in an environmentally sensitive zone. So it’s preventive, and we will be doing it.” BMCC is drawing up specifications for how the work should be conducted, Anderson said, and will soon put it out for bid. Given the job’s size and complexity, he does not expect it to be done before winter break.

“We’re concerned about the lead in the HVAC system, and will press to see that the system is thoroughly cleaned,” said Greenbaum. “We urge the administration to continue

testing and provide our members at BMCC with the results.”

How lead would end up at the exhaust fan is puzzling, since filters at the air intakes blocked most of it. Greenbaum’s hypothesis noted that “there is a fair chance that the dust could have come in through open windows and doors and then been taken up into the HVAC system.”

NIOSH STUDY

A report just released by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) shows that 24% of BMCC faculty and staff have experienced symptoms of depression since Sept. 11, while 15% showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. The data are from a survey NIOSH conducted among BMCC and York workers last Spring at the request of the PSC and other unions in the vicinity of the WTC.

The study also shows that BMCC faculty and staff had higher rates of persistent respiratory symptoms. The PSC is arranging for the study’s director to meet with faculty and staff at BMCC and York to share the data and answer questions.



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Welcome wagon

Many new full-time faculty and staff – and many more new part-timers – will be arriving at CUNY this fall. This month, introduce yourself to one of them. Tell him or her that we have a union, explain the advances in the new contract, share this copy of *Clarion*. (Some may not yet be on our mailing list.) Don’t assume that new colleagues know about the reassigned time for untenured faculty research, or the professional development fund for HEOs and CLTs, or the paid office hour for adjuncts. The best organizing has always been person-to-person; your 15 minutes with a colleague could create a PSC activist for life.