

Research Foundation/CUNY Strike Authorization Vote Fact Sheet

On September 24, 2009 PSC members at the Research Foundation Central Office voted to authorize a strike; 91% voted in favor with a turnout of 83%. What brought them to this point? Nearly 10 months after the contract expired, RF management is still offering below cost-of-living salary increases and demanding that employees pay a greater share of health insurance premiums. Prior to the strike authorization vote, management's economic offer was 2, 2.25 and 2.25% per year with an increase in the employee contribution to the health insurance premium from 17% to 19% in the third year of the contract.

RF management has never claimed they don't have the money. Their bottom line is healthy, they have hired half a dozen new employees over the past several months, and as of October 5, their website announced that they had received \$23 million in federal stimulus funding so far this year. (The stimulus funding counter on the RF home page increases almost daily.) RF President Richard Rothbard recently received a 44% salary increase totaling \$78,000, which alone would be nearly enough to cover a one-year 2% salary increase for the Central Office bargaining unit of 84 workers. Moreover the Foundation spends approximately \$500,000 per year on Nixon Peabody, the management-side labor law firm that leads RF negotiations. The amount paid to Nixon Peabody for one year is enough to provide 3 years of 4% salary increases to the Central Office employees.

The Research Foundation, a private, not-for-profit educational corporation, was chartered by the State of New York in 1963 to give CUNY heightened flexibility in meeting the demands of changing grant requirements. According to the 2008 annual report, grant awards exceeded \$344 million. The RF provides the infrastructure to administer these grants and perform sponsored program activities. Over the course of a year, there are roughly 12,000 RF field employees who teach ESL and GED classes and work in the laboratories, theaters, studios, libraries and offices of CUNY's colleges and professional schools.

The PSC members in the Central Office administer post-grant fiscal matters for city, state, federal and private awards. They support Principal Investigators and Grants Officers from several campuses from the inception of an award, through the billing and reporting stages, to the final closeout process. This includes: establishing accounts for use, preliminary approval of payment requests, purchase orders, personnel actions, coding of cash receipts, and intensive budget monitoring. They interact with Principal Investigators, Grants Officers, Professors, Assistants and Sponsor Officers on an ongoing basis, and maintain the payroll for the RFCUNY field employees.

Although the courts have ruled that the RF is a separate legal entity from CUNY, 10 of the 15 members of its Board of Directors—including Chancellor Goldstein and 5 College Presidents—are current CUNY administrators or faculty members,. Chancellor Goldstein is the Board's chairman. There is also a Faculty Advisory Council consisting of 9 CUNY faculty members from different colleges and the Staff Director of the UFS.

PSC has represented the staff at the RF Central Office as a separate bargaining unit for 35 years. Since the RF is a private entity, the workers are covered by the National Labor Relations Act, not the Taylor Law, and therefore have the legal right to strike. The current management's intransigence at the bargaining table has compelled the RF Central Office workers to authorize a strike for the first time in the history of the bargaining unit.