

A PSC PROPOSAL

Building the 21st-Century CUNY

Below is the PSC's proposal to the New York State Commission on Higher Education, which released its preliminary report on December 17 (see page 5). "Our proposal is for a bold and unapologetic reinvestment of public money in CUNY," PSC President Barbara Bowen told the commission in testimony on December 2. "Decades of damage cannot be undone by business-as-usual marginal increases, and losses on the magnitude of those suffered by CUNY cannot be recouped by imposing higher costs on our students."

To reverse the three decades of underfunding of the City University of New York and provide the resources necessary to make CUNY one of the nation's great universities, substantial new investments are needed over the next five years to:

Add new full-time faculty lines sufficient to bring CUNY's full-time faculty workforce to 11,000, which is the number of full-time faculty employed by CUNY before State and City disinvestment.

This Fall, CUNY enrolled 232,114 students – it's the largest student body at any time in the last 35 years. Yet, the University now has only 6,541 full-time faculty, including librarians and counselors, or 4,512 less than in 1972. To put it another way, CUNY has approximately 1 full-time faculty member for every 35 students enrolled today, compared to 1 for every 21 students enrolled in 1972.

The PSC strongly supports CUNY's hiring target of 2,300 net new full-time faculty over the next four years so that 70% of the instructional workload can be covered by full-time faculty. This will not completely close the gap – especially if enrollments rise more than expected – but it will be a major step forward.

Restore faculty compensation and benefits to national competitiveness so that CUNY is able to recruit and retain top-quality faculty who want to make their careers at CUNY. Salaries for full-time faculty and

staff at CUNY have lost between 27% and 51% of their value since 1971. At a time when the cost of living in New York City is making it increasingly difficult for middle-class people to stay and raise a family here, CUNY is finding it harder to retain faculty at all levels. Though the University is still able to recruit young professors because of its reputation as an exciting place to work, the University is on the verge of becoming non-competitive nationally because of depressed salaries and substandard working conditions.

Restoring the competitiveness of faculty compensation and benefits is critical if CUNY is to contribute to the broad research and development agenda as well as train large numbers of new public school teachers – to name but two specific goals envisioned in the governor's charge to the commission. Restoration of salaries and conditions to competitive levels is also essential if CUNY is to replace the generation of senior faculty now nearing retirement.

Provide equitable pay and benefits to part-time faculty, recognizing that CUNY has relied on adjunct staff to make up for the severe lack of resources. CUNY hires approximately 10,000 part-time faculty and staff each semester to be able to provide classroom teaching and other vital services to students. Many adjunct faculty have served continuously on a semester-by-semester, contingent basis for a decade or longer. These adjuncts

deserve better pay, benefits and job security in recognition of the vital role they have played through CUNY's lean years. Even if full-time faculty lines are added, CUNY can still anticipate relying on a core of adjuncts. Instruction for CUNY students is compromised if these positions fail to offer even a living wage.

Restore a teaching load that allows time for students and time for research. Perhaps the single most important factor in a student's education is time with individual faculty members. Class size and teaching loads at CUNY make such time almost impossible. The excessive teaching load and class size at CUNY also directly inhibit research; arguably no factor has more influence on the ability of CUNY faculty to compete for research funding.

Support doctoral students by granting health insurance and tuition waivers – provisions that are standard at almost every other PhD-granting institution. Investing in graduate student employees improves CUNY's standing nationally and its ability to attract the best candidates for senior faculty positions. It is essential if CUNY is to increase its capacity for important research. An investment in graduate assistants is also an investment in quality teaching, which will benefit generations of undergraduates to come.

Create conditions of academic employment that bring CUNY up to the standard of peer institutions nationally and regionally. These include, for example, paid family leave; tu-

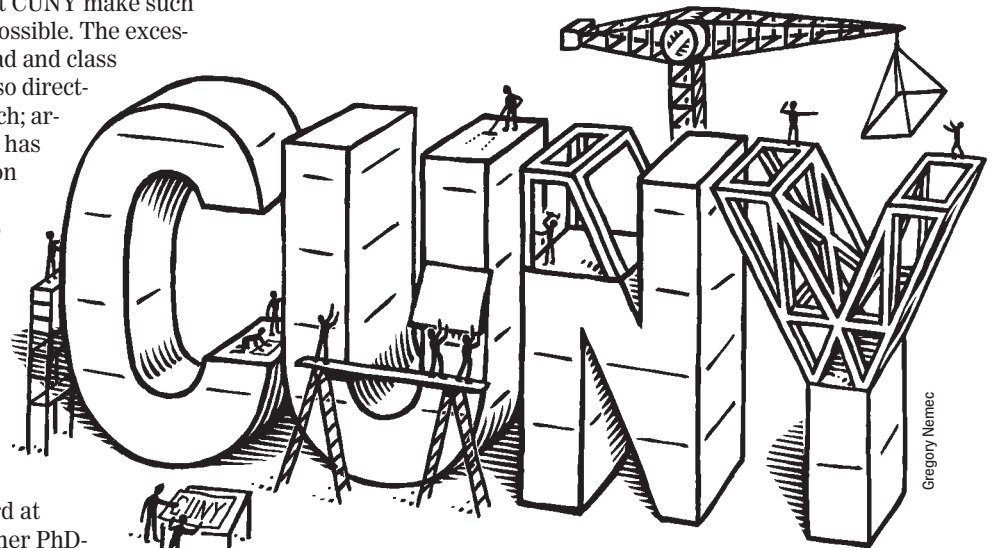
ition waivers for family members; and start-up investments in laboratory space, equipment and other resources to support research.

Introduce a pilot CUNY Mentors Fund with grants of time and material support to faculty and staff who work intensively with individual and small groups of students on a project basis. There is no better way to improve student retention and graduation rates than individual attention from their professors. The proposed Mentors Fund would provide opportunities to develop

standards of one for every 1,000-1,500 students.

Fully fund CUNY's capital budget to make up for decades of deferred maintenance, in addition to providing new science and technology facilities, libraries, classrooms and office space. Replenish library collections, many of which were severely compromised during the 1980s and 1990s. A whole generation of scholarship is missing from CUNY libraries.

To make CUNY a great university requires providing the resources



new service learning programs, take students to professional conferences, organize support groups for minority and immigrant students, and create new internships and field placements.

Increase funding for student services, especially psychological counseling. Outside the College Discovery and SEEK programs, CUNY community colleges have only one licensed mental health counselor for every 2,236 students on average; senior colleges and graduate programs have just one for every 5,096. These levels of service fall far short of the nationally-recognized

to all the University to compete in national and regional academic labor markets. The level of reinvestment needed cannot be achieved by marginal investments because the gap is just too great. The PSC feels strongly that it is unfair to require current students, whose tuition and fees already cover approximately 38% of CUNY's total operating budget (up from a 19% share in 1990), to make up this long-term disinvestment. We call on the commission to be as bold as the founders of CUNY in 1847 and to recommend a return to full funding for CUNY. Anything else shortchanges New York's students and New York's future.

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15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Find the 'lost' faculty

How many of your department's candidates have turned down an offer and how many of your colleagues have left CUNY because of our uncompetitive salaries, onerous workloads, inadequate research support, or missing paid parental leave, among benefit or other concerns? Take a few minutes to fill out the form at www.psc-cuny.org/LostFaculty.

htm and help the PSC document CUNY's "lost" faculty and staff. By filling out the form, you'll help the union show that improvements in salaries and working conditions are integral to fixing the University's recruitment and retention problem. Help us alert students, allies, and political and civic leaders to the crisis CUNY faces as a result of its uncompetitive salaries!