BCC promises sinkhole fix

Last year, leaky pipes created a sinkhole at Bronx CC; now it can fit a SUV. Activists pressed the administration for more information about promised repairs.

PAGE 4

CUNY NEEDS A RAISE

The second week in April was Contract Week across CUNY. Above, PSC members were joined by DC37 members at College of Staten Island as they protested CUNY management’s failure to put forth an economic offer to either union. Members on a dozen other campuses drew attention to the lack of competitive compensation – salaries for faculty and professional staff are 20 to 30% below those at comparable public universities like Rutgers and UConn. PSC President Barbara Bowen wrote an open letter to Chancellor Matthew Goldstein on the same subject in March.

PAGE 3

CORPORATE CUNY

Hunter class controversial

Coach, the handbag company, paid Hunter $10K to offer a course in which students ran a public relations campaign on the evils of counterfeit bags.

PAGE 5

BUDGET

PSC fights budget cuts

State and City cuts to CUNY are on the table. The union is marshalling members and others to tell politicians that investments in CUNY pay off.

PAGES 7 & 12

HEALTH & SAFETY

More disability coverage

Until May 15, eligible full-timers can purchase increased disability insurance coverage without providing a medical history.

PAGE 8

CLINICAL FOCUS

Sue Bryant explains how CUNY is improving legal education everywhere.

PAGE 6
PSC training focuses on organizing

By Peter Hogness

“Organizing is how you get anything,” that’s how Lillian Taiz, president of the California Faculty Association (CFA), opened her talk at the PSC’s leadership training program, held at the union hall on March 7 and 8. And that was the central point of the two-day session. “The training was great,” said Nikki McDaniel, associate professor of biology at Branc Community College. “It had a little of everything that we needed to really gear up the organizing on our campus. I came out of it feeling more prepared for the projects ahead, and more connected with other activists at my college.”

“CUNY can be very fragmented,” observed Douglas Medina, a higher education associate at Baruch. “There’s often not a lot of opportunity to interact with people in other offices and departments. Not to mention the adjuncts – they don’t even have a phone or a desk!” It’s one of biggest obstacles to organizing at CUNY, Medina said.

The training session was an opportunity to bring people together, said Jen Hayashida, an adjunct in Asian American studies at Hunter. “What was the most helpful for me,” she told Clarion, “was meeting people from other campuses. It was a chance to learn more about the challenges they face in terms of working conditions, to learn about strategies that worked for them that we could consider implementing at Hunter.”

People at CUNY are separated in many ways, Hayashida observed, and the union can offer a way to reach out across those divisions. “I have found it really inspiring to see full-time faculty who are committed to everyone’s needs,” she explained. She recalled a full-timer from College of Staten Island who spoke at the mass meeting, not only about their own pay raise but on issues affecting other groups as well. “It makes such a difference when we have conversations across these lines,” she said. “There’s no doubt that everyone’s getting screwed, and we need to stick up for each other.”

Another gap, said Medina, is generational. “I was definitely one of the younger participants,” he commented. “If PSC is going to grow and have political power in CUNY, we need to recruit more of the newer faculty and staff who’ve been hired in the last few years.”

In discussions at the training session, he recalled, “I said what I would like to see is more resources put into outreach to younger members. A couple of people from the leadership came up to me and said, ‘You’re absolutely right. That’s why we’re having this training workshop, and we need to do more.’” Medina said he looks for ways that he can contribute to building the union at the base. “For me there’s an educational aspect,” he said, “explaining to people I work with that unions are not some distant, blewed bureaucracy. They’re a real force for you and me to work together, to exert pressure and create change.”

Again and again, participants in the two-day meeting emphasized that what it takes for the union to bring people together is member-to-member communication. “I think the one-on-one organizing is the most important,” said McDaniel, “and also the hardest thing for most of us to do.”

“We are used to sitting back and pressing a button online to send a letter to their senator,” agreed Medina. “And that’s good – but they’re not used to talking to people, being socially active within their department.”

In workshop sessions on base-building, activists discussed how to build effective communication networks at the grassroots. “That’s where our power comes from,” said Nancy Romer, professor of psychology at Brooklyn College, “keeping in touch through member-to-member discussion.”

The training session ended with a workshop, which at least the presenter – a professional who does one-on-one organizing in hospitals – said was the most inspiring. “The training was great,” said Scott Dexter, associate professor of computer science at Brooklyn College. “It also made clear how much effort we all have to put in if we really want that power for ourselves.”

One member who’s ready to step up to the plate is LaRoi Lawson, a library faculty member at Bronx Community College. Before the training session, Lawson said, “I would have considered myself a PSC member who does the obligatory mailings, signups, meetings and so on – but not ‘active’ to the point of going on a picket line in front of the president’s office for better workload and pay.”

But that began to change, he said, in workshop discussions that got him thinking about the many ways management’s agenda fails to serve the needs of the University. “[It] made me decide that I was either part of the problem, or part of the solution.”

Lawson told Clarion, “though this process will more than likely evolve with time.”

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CUNY needs one health plan for all

I read your article “At CUNY, Adjunct Health Care is Broken” with great interest. I want to point out another flaw in the broken system and add an argument for all employees to be covered by the NYC Health Benefits Program.

I’m a veteran adjunct at BMCC who was offered a full-time substitute position this semester. When I accept, this meant going from the Welfare Fund insurance plan that covers adjuncts to the NYC Benefits Program. My contract – and coverage – ends on July 31. Whether I return to BMCC in the fall semester as an adjunct or as a full-time sub, during August I will have to go on the federal COBRA program and pay a very high premium to maintain my insurance coverage.

This situation is wrong and unfair. After teaching at BMCC for over 15 years, now I suddenly have to pay out of pocket for this month. I read in the March issue of Clarion John Drobnick’s letter about the late Hobart Jarrett, who was a member of the celebrated debate team at Wiley College that was the basis for the film The Great Debaters. Although not an English major when I was a student at BMCC, I took Professor Jarrett’s Shakespeare course. We read many important plays and sonnets as well as first-rate literary criticism. When Professor Jarrett read aloud from the texts, he was particularly inspiring. He was one of the greatest teachers I ever had.

Kate Walter
BMCC

Great debater, greatest teacher

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Kate Walter
BMCC

Irvin Schoenfeld
City College

WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006.
E-MAIL: PHONESASS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: (212) 302-7875.
PSC members at a dozen colleges organized protest actions the week of April 7 through 11 to demand a fair contract. With picket lines, leafleting, and in meetings with Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, union members had the same message: it’s time to make CUNY salaries competitive again.

At the College of Staten Island, 60 people turned out on April 8 for an informational picket line. The action was jointly organized with the other main union at CUNY, District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

“It’s only fair that we need a raise for ourselves,” said PSC Chapter Chair Vasileios Petratos, who chairs the political science and economics department at CSI. It’s hard to hire, he said. “Applicants look at the salary we’re offering, and say this is below national standards – and when you couple that with New York’s high cost of living, we’re way behind.”

This too affects students. “Our working conditions are the students’ learning conditions,” Petratos said.

The slogan “CUNY needs a raise!” was also popular with DC37 members. “We don’t get enough money,” said Barbara Leskowitz, a DC37 member who works in the college’s publications office. “If CUNY and DC37 can work together, I think it’ll benefit both unions.”

Mickey Eherlein, of DC37’s college assistants’ local, said they have been working under an expired contract for more than a year. “The unions came together and saw that we have common objectives,” said Petratos. PSC members at LaGuardia turned out for a picket line on April 7 in bitter weather. “We are out in the cold because CUNY management has put us out in the cold,” said Danny Lynch, professor of English. “They refuse to make a financial offer – and without that, we can’t have a contract.” Professor Michael Frank said it was “disgraceful and disrespectful” that CUNY has made no economic offer.

SILENT MARCH

On April 8 at City Tech, the PSC chapter organized a “silent march” through hallways and department offices. The idea, said Chapter Chair Bob Cermode, was to have a visible, visible impact without disrupting classes. “We got a very good reception,” he added. That CUNY has made no visible impact without disrupting classes.

Asked Goldman for public advocacy on salaries.

He called on Chancellor Goldstein to join with the union in drawing public attention to the need for competitive salaries at CUNY. “You have shown that you can be an outspoken advocate before the City and State for your priorities for CUNY,” he noted, including spending “millions of dollars on advertising to advance your agenda for the University. If national competitive salaries are really a priority, we expect the same level of public advocacy for investment in the faculty and staff.”

“The University’s financial offer is ultimately a statement of the University’s priorities,” Bowen emphasized. “Is restoration of our salaries a priority or not?”

Pay is not the only issue in the current negotiations. Unlike SUNY, CUNY’s graduate employees do not have health care provided by the University, and in contract bargaining the PSC has demanded that CUNY provide it. In a March 16 picket at the Graduate Center, the union and union members have demanded that CUNY provide health coverage for all doctoral students and graduate employees.

“No health insurance – makes me sick!” the crowd chanted. “Endless excuses – make me sick!” Ellen Zitani, a doctoral student in history who teaches at Hunter, spoke to the 50 protestors about the disparity with the SUNY system. “SUNY [graduate] students have affordable health insurance with pre-scription drug coverage,” Zitani said. “CUNY students deserve equality and health care.” The protest, and the issue, received coverage on NY1.

“IT’s unrealistic to think that our health care situation doesn’t affect our students,” said picketer Jolie Cerrazas. The two plans CUNY makes available to its graduate students, she said, require that they pay the entire cost themselves – and many cannot afford it.

Neither plan, she added, covers pre-scription drugs.

“I really need health insurance,” said Ellen Abrell, a graduate teaching fellow at Hunter and a doctoral student in anthropology. “I had coverage, but couldn’t keep paying it and had to drop it. When I had an eye and ear infection, a doctor visit cost $200, and the medication cost another $200.”

DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

The protest was organized to coincide with a visit by Chancellor Goldstein to the Graduate Center, and union pressure and the organizing for the rally had an impact. Five days before the protest, the chancellor and Graduate Center President Bill Kelly wrote to legislative leaders in Albany, request- ing funding for CUNY to offer the same coverage as SUNY. In discus-sions at the meeting, GC faculty continued to press the chancellor on the health insurance issue.

The chancellor was confronted again the next day at Brooklyn College, where he met with faculty. The Brooklyn College PSC Chapter presented him with a letter asking for action on CUNY salaries. Many de-partments have gone through multiple, extensive, time-consuming faculty searches, only to be turned down by our first, second and third choices,” the letter said. CUNY is now experiencing “severe problems with faculty recruitment and retention.” The letter also called for adding adjuncts to the regular NYC health plan, providing them with some job security, and better oppor-tunities for advancement for HOs and CLTs.

The statement asked the chancellor to withdraw management’s demand to remove department chairs from the PSC bargaining unit, which it described as a “threat to collegiality” – and Goldstein commented on this issue during the campus meeting. The chancellor was quite open about his view that department chairs not only should not be in the union, but also should not be elected. But he also said that if faculty opinion was strongly against taking chairs out of the union, he was prepared to concede the issue.

Months of campus protest against taking department chairs out of the union seem to be getting results. “It shows that if we keep speaking out, he’s forced to respond,” said Carolina Bank Muñoz, assistant professor of sociology at Brooklyn College. During the rest of the semester, she said, “we need coordinated efforts to express members’ concerns and frustrations. Now is the time to keep the pressure on.”
When the sinkhole at Bronx Community College first appeared in April 2007, it was as large as a Volkswagen Bug. Now, it’s large enough for a full-size SUV, said union activists at BCC. Thus, the cost of repairing the hole has increased significantly, as has the need for a plan, complete with timelines, for the elimination of the underlying problem and the repair of the hole.

PETITION

In celebration, the campus’s PSC chapter held a party on April 1, dubbed “the First Annual Sinkhole Farewell Party.” The event included balloons, music and donut holes for all. Faculty, students and staff were invited to sign a petition, asking the administration to be more communicative as the repairs got underway and to fix related problems in the campus heating system.

More than 600 people signed that day, union activists reported. The sinkhole was created when the campus’s steam heating system, which uses aging pipes that run under the campus’s steam heating system, was shut down for preventive maintenance. The hole is right in front of Havemeyer Hall, the building that houses BCC’s College Language Immersion Program (CLIP). CLIP teachers told of rampant rot and reach infestations as well as student and faculty inconveniences resulting from the sinkhole.

Many of the campus’s health and safety problems are interrelated, said campus union leaders, and the needed repairs are extensive. “They can’t fix the hole without fixing the pipes,” noted CLIP’s Chair Marianne Pita. Plans are underway to dig up the pipes, replace them and then re-cover the ground. Pita said the administration hopes to be done in September, but that November “might be more realistic.”

At the party, CLIP teacher Leslie DeGiere gave a tour of the many health and safety problems in Have- meyer Hall that preceded the sinkhole, including rotting floors, dining rooms and ceilings with swaths of plaster missing that are “patched” with plastic. But while these were pre-existing problems, many cannot be fixed until the sinkhole is repaired.

DeGiere noted that in her classroom, the ceiling and wall is missing a large section of plaster and is covered by a tarp. “They can’t fix the wall until they fix the leak in the roof,” she said. “They can’t fix the leak without a crane. They can’t bring in a crane until the sinkhole is fixed,” she explained, because the ground nearest the roof leak is adjacent to the sinkhole and likely to collapse under a crane’s weight.

The PSC has hired an organizing director, who now joins the union’s legal director and an organizing coordinator as part of the union’s professional staff. “The PSC agenda is to build the political power necessary to restore the salaries and quality of work our members deserve,” said PSC Treasurer Michael Fabricant.

CHRIS AKIN

Organizing Director Chris Aikin comes to the PSC fresh from the West Coast, where Aikin organized the union’s East Coast strike efforts. Film and television writers fought hard and won a groundbreaking agreement including new rights to compensation for work distributed over the internet.

Aikin grew up in a union household in East Texas—his mother was a member of the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME). After earning a BA at the University of Texas-Austin, Aikin was hired by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in Texas, where he worked with PSC Organizing Coordinator Nick Cruz.

He went on to work for the Communications Workers of America (CWA), and came to NYC in 2001. While organizing full time, Aikin did graduate work in public policy at NYU and in labor studies at Queens College. His experience as a student at Queens and Texas left him with a deep commitment to affordable public education, Aikin told Clarion, and that’s one reason he’s glad to be working for the PSC.

Another is the union’s ambitious organizing agenda. “I’m looking forward to building strength for campus struggles and for fighting on our city- and statewide issues, too,” he told Clarion. “The work of organizing is working with members to get them in a position to fight most effectively. The easier we make it for members to be involved, the more we win.”

PETER ZWIEBACH

“I grew up in a two-union household—one PSC and one NYSUT,” said PSC lawyer Peter Zwiebach. His father was a political science professor at Queens College and the Graduate Center; his mother was shop steward in the NY State Unit ed Teachers local at a Glen Cove high school, where she taught English. “Unions are very, very important for people who work,” said Zwiebach. “There’s just an imbalance of power in the workplace without them.”

Hired last fall as the PSC’s director of legal affairs, Zwiebach previously worked at the New York City labor law firm of Gladstein, Reif & Meginnis, where his work included representation for public-sector unions such as the CWA, Transit Workers Local 100 and the hospital union 1199/SEIU.

Progressive politics & ambitious organizing draw new staff to union.

KIAN FREDERICK

Kian Frederick is a veteran labor activist who came on board this fall as a PSC organizing coordinator. She works alongside Nick Cruz, the union’s other organizing coordinator, who started last summer. Frederick divides her time between the union’s campaign for a new CUNY-wide contract and organizing work with employees of the CUNY Research Foundation.

A native New Yorker, Frederick worked for a decade as a waitress for SEIU Local 32 BJ and on the ALP’s Donald West campaign, organizing flight attendants.

“Organizing is one of those funny things that gets in your blood,” said Frederick. “Working at PSC brings her full circle, she said, because she got her start in organizing as a student at Hunter College. Frederick led the 1989 student movement against tuition increases, when some 15,000 students took to the streets.

“That was a defining moment for me,” she told Clarion. “I’d never felt that much power in my life, just taking over the streets and having everyone get out of the way.” With the Research Foundation (RF) organizing campaign, Frederick and other organizing staff are working to unionize and win contracts for the thousands of RF employees who work on CUNY campuses. To date, campus-based RF employees have voted to organize at City Tech, LaGuardia and the CUNY Graduate Center.

Frederick said wages, health care and the foundation’s hiring practices are issues that need to be addressed. “A lot of people have not had wage increases in six or eight years,” she noted. Frederick will be doing “the same work as PSC members, but making less money.”

As with so many union issues, Frederick said, “it’s a basic issue of respect.”
The luxury accessories company Coach paid $10,000 to Hunter College to offer a Spring 2007 course on the counterfeiting of luxury brand-name goods. Hunter faculty members have charged that academic freedom was violated, and the case is currently under investigation by the Hunter College Senate.

Students enrolled in the class, “Special Public Relations,” were told that an industry-funded group, an adjunct to a public relations company hired by the International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (IACC), an industry-funded group, taught and created course materials that were provided by Paul Werth Associates, a public relations company hired by the International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (IACC), an industry-funded group.

Corporate-sponsored course offered at the suggestion of the administration

Coach Inc., pays $10,000 for class outcomes. Roman emphasized, the class was a success: “The professor who observed the class thought it went very well. It fulfilled the objectives of the course, as articulated in the syllabus.”

Timing

Roman noted that the controversy around the course comes as his department holds its next election for chair.

More broadly, Roman told Clarion, he doesn’t see an inherent problem with the course’s corporate support. “From my perspective, there were no violations of academic freedom and I don’t think Hunter is under any threat from corporate America and take notice of their involvement with higher ed. You’ll see there is quite a pronounced role. I’m not advocating it—I’m just saying it exists.”

The class began to draw attention weeks before the end of the semester. Roman thanked Portlock for doing the “Coach course,” sparking questions and concerns from other department members. Portlock said. Ewen, who studies public relations, began to speak out about the issue, and several bloggers began to cover it. InsiderHigher Ed.com and the Hunter student newspaper The Envoy ran stories in March, and Forbes covered it in April.

Credibility

The controversy follows a 2006 survey in which many Hunter faculty said that dissent on college policy issues would involve administrative retaliation. (See Clarion, Summer 2006, page 7.) Ewen told Clarion that the course fits with a pattern of public relations firms using college faculty autonomy under President Raab.

The president “didn’t know, or didn’t care, that this was inappropriate,” Ewen told Clarion. The way the course was run, he said, “was in total violation of the fundamental assumptions of faculty autonomy under President Raab.”

“They’re giving you $10,000,” Ewen warned. “She’s selling off the credibility of the college.”

PS: Academic Freedom Committee Chair Steve Leberstein said the case involves potential violations of academic freedom in two areas: “One is the curriculum and the second is the selection of the faculty.”

“It says nothing ill about Portlock that he told the chair that he wasn’t qualified and didn’t want to do it,” Leberstein said. “If this happens to you — call the union!”

The case concerns the tension between defending the independence of department chairs, Leberstein said, and the pressure to accept an industry-sponsored course even if there is money attached,” he said.

Faculty members need to be vigilant about violations of academic freedom, said Leberstein. “The independent functions of the faculty are under attack with the corporatization of CUNY,” he said.
Leading in legal education

Carnegie report: CUNY’s approach is better

Sue Bryant of CUNY Law School talked with Clarion about a Carnegie Foundation report on legal education.

What else did the Carnegie report say about CUNY Law?

They praised the fact that we had learning goals for our students at an institutional level, rather than each faculty member deciding what the students should learn in their course. Our faculty spends a fair amount of time talking about pedagogy and the best ways for students to learn. And we were praised for the way we assess students. In addition to the traditional end-of-the-year exams, we evaluate our students based on professional competencies, which are criterion-referenced rather than curve-referenced. We say, “an excellent lawyer does these things, rather than, you’re the best out of the group of 16 so you get A.”

One of Carnegie’s criticisms of legal education is that almost all the grading is done on a curve and assessment is done basically to sort students. We prefer to communicate to students where they are on their path to being excellent practitioners.

So this sorting of students is the top priority if you’re a prestigious, big-bucks law firm and you want to know who the cream of the crop is for you to hire, but it’s not as useful to the students.

Right. As if you have to sort the students to get a job.

The major way instruction occurs is by the faculty. We accept in legal education – not across the board, but law schools were beginning to have a smattering of clinical education courses. So we had the luxury of hiring a new faculty, and the law school very much embraced clinical education as a method for learning law practice and professional responsibility. It was deeply embedded from the very beginning.

The student’s work in the classroom, but a much more complex narrative from which those salient facts may arise.

And do people play the clients?

Yes. I’ve played a nun who runs a homeless shelter, an administrator at a Legal Aid Society – different characters. The students start in a simulated context with narrower tasks. In their first semester, they might be focusing more on how to get the important facts from the client, how to recognize what the important facts are. The “client” may be interviewed in a room full of people. So you’re not even talking about how to build rapport with this human being that’s across the table from you, as you would with a real client. In that situation, you’re trying to get the students to think about facts in a more complex way. Then maybe in their second semester you might have them interview a simulated client in a way that’s closer to the real thing – two students with one client – and videotape it and give them feedback.

Then in their second year they’ll take another one of these lawyering courses and there some of them will have real clients. For example, we have a very interesting program with the Welfare Rights Initiative at Hunter, where our students represented CUNY undergrads at hearings on welfare rules. We’ve helped thousands of students stay in school, and only lost a handful of cases since the program began.

This sounds like a very labor-intensive way to train people. Yes, and that’s one reason a lot of law schools don’t do it. But here’s one of my favorite quotes from the Carnegie report:

Asked how CUNY, hardly a well-endowed, affluent institution, can afford to provide such an introduction to legal study when their more affluent competitor institutions obviously seek the economy of scale afforded by large first-year classes, CUNY administrators answered, “We cannot afford not to do it.”

The reason we say that has to do with our mission of sending students into public-service jobs. They are not afforded by large first-year classes, endowed, affluent institution, can afford to provide such an introduction to legal study when their more affluent competitor institutions obviously seek the economy of scale afforded by large first-year classes, CUNY administrators answered, “We cannot afford not to do it.”

This case dialogue with faculty is important, but it’s not the only way they’re learning to “think like a lawyer.” By that we mean the capability to extract legal principles from cases, statutes and commentaries and synthesize that information into new legal doctrine and apply it. It’s a highly analytical, highly abstracted process where you glean the important facts that cause a case to turn one direction or another. This could be ten facts out of a week’s worth of witnesses.

This is important, but it’s not the only thing involved in being a lawyer. And in many law schools the people who are hired to teach in those large classrooms have never practiced. They may have dabbled for a judge, but they haven’t practiced.

We wanted students to get more practical experience – but we also wanted more integration of theory and practice, moving back and forth between the two. We wanted the education to be more like the work of lawyers.

The Carnegie report emphasizes that learning is developmental – that learners need to try things on, receive feedback, make mistakes, be mentored.

One of their criticisms of legal education is that it focuses too narrowly on “thinking like a lawyer” and that it’s not developmental. The pattern of case-dialogue instruction gets repeated and repeated, you’re just studying something different – you’re studying securities, anti-trust, poverty law, family law. By the third year, students are often really bored because it’s all so similar.

So we try to do it differently and developmentally. Our students are introduced to practice in their first year, in simulated cases, where they will apply what they’re learning in their large classroom, in thinking like a lawyer. So they’ll take that thinking now and apply it to a fairly sophisticated simulated case.

In CUNY Law School curriculum?

CUNY is mentioned more than any other school in the Carnegie report. One of the best in the nation. The CUNY Law School curriculum?

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What is the Carnegie report’s criticism of CUNY Law?

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Big budget fight looms

By PETER ROGNESS

There is a real threat of significant cuts to City funding for CUNY in this year’s budget, say PSC legislative activists. Mayor Bloomberg has proposed slashing support for CUNY’s community college operating budget by $60 million, with an additional $65.5 million in programmatic cuts affecting both se-

Bloomberg wants deep cuts to CUNY

Counselors and mentoring

Below is an excerpt from the PSC proposal, “Increase Faculty Coun-

The Professional Staff Congress/ CUNY proposes an additional $2.5 million in funding to the City Univer-

The events at Virginia Polytechnic

NY State budget resolved

Just as Clarion went to press, the New York State budget was settled, more than a week past the April 1 deadline.

For CUNY, the State budget in-

The $10 cut per full-time equiva-

Finally, a statutory framework

NY State legislative staff in Albany

Note: The PSC is also seeking State funding for more faculty counselors at CUNY. The counselor/student ratio is 1:3,000.
Open enrollment for upgraded disability coverage

By PATRICK SMITH
PSC-CUNY Pension Counselor

The Welfare Fund has initiated an improvement to the disability insurance rider offered to full-time faculty and professional staff through The Standard Life Insurance Company of New York. The change has triggered a unique opportunity for covered members to buy the optional disability rider without medical evidence.

Disability insurance is designed to replace a portion of monthly income in the event an employee cannot work because of sickness or injury. All full-time members of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund with one year or more of service receive a basic disability benefit from the Welfare Fund. Many members opted in the past to buy the optional rider for a higher level of coverage, and this rider is now being upgraded.

Those who are enrolled in the existing rider program will automatically receive the new, improved coverage. Those who have not previously applied will now have an opportunity to get this enhanced benefit without providing “evidence of insurability” – the usual medical history requirement. This waiver is normally available to members only if they enroll within 60 days after completing one year of service. But during a special enrollment window from April 15 through May 15, Standard Life will forego that requirement.

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New chance for full-timers to up coverage

ENHANCED

The upgraded disability rider provides a maximum income replacement benefit, raising it from $5,000 per month to $6,000 per month effective June 1, 2008. The original rider provided four improvements over the basic plan:

1) The benefit is set at a higher percentage of salary (60% rather than 55%).
2) A longer duration of benefit payments – from any age until 65, rather than capped at 5 years (see summary plan description for provisions on when a disability starts at over age 60).
3) Payment into a special TIAA pension while benefits are being paid out; and
4) A higher maximum monthly payment ($5,000 rather than $2,500).

All provisions are incorporated in the new rider except item 4, where the monthly maximum is being increased to $6,000.

This is a second chance to get the higher level of protection that many people wish they had taken when it was first offered,” said WF Executive Director Larry Morgain.

Contact your campus human resources office for a brochure on the new rider, enrollment forms or for any additional information. (More details on the Welfare Fund’s basic disability plan and the rider option are also available on the Welfare Fund website, pscunywf.org.)

New names, new options for TRS funds

By ELLEN BALLEISEN
PSC Pension Counselor

If you have a tax-deferred annuity (TDA) with the Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS), or if you are a TRS member in Tiers 1 or 2, you will soon see changes and more options. TRS is adding three new funds, renaming three existing funds, and making it easier for members to move money from one fund into another.

Both retirees and active members will be able to take advantage of the new features. For TRS members in all pension tiers, the changes will apply to TDA accounts; for members in Tiers 1 and 2, the changes also apply to their ASF and ITHP pension accounts.

The six funds will be known jointly as “the Passport Funds,” and the new names and new options will be implemented this summer. (The effective date is July 1, see www.trs.nyc.ny.us for updates.)

The three existing funds, which are managed directly by TRS, will all be renamed.

The Fixed Return Fund is the new name for the former Variable B option in the Annuity Program. This fund invests in “stable-value vehicles” such as guaranteed investment contracts or fixed income securities, and aims “to preserve principal and provide a steady rate of return.”

The Stable-Value Fund is the new name for the former Variable B option in the Annuity Program. This fund invests in “stable-value vehicles” such as guaranteed investment contracts or fixed income securities, and aims “to preserve principal and provide a steady rate of return.”

The Diversified Equity Fund is the new name for the former Variable A Annuity Program. This fund invests mainly in US equities, with the stated objective of “a rate of return comparable to the rate of the broad equity market.”

The IFAF Protection Fund, which invests in mutual funds and assets such as commodities, real estate securities, and inflation-linked bonds. Its objective, says TRS, is “to provide a positive real rate of return that exceeds inflation” over the long term.

The International Equity Fund, which invests mostly in non-US companies. Managed directly by TRS, this fund is essentially the international investment component of TRS’s long-standing Variable A Annuity Fund (see below), TRS says that its aim is “to achieve a rate of return comparable to the return on the non-US developed equity market” over the long term.

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Cash and cash equivalents  $ 975,489
Certificates of deposits  1,251,040
Investments (Note B)  3,496,500
Accounts receivable  170,449
Cash equivalents  375,453
Prepaid expense (Note E)  301,910
Other prepaid expenses  10,195
Fixed assets (net of accumulated depreciation) of $955,378 (Note A)  396,242
Total assets  $ 7,450,492

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS
Due to the New York State  
United States Treasury, Social Security  
American Federation of Teachers  800,000
Accounts payable  298,912
Accrued fringe benefits  365,817
Other accrued expenses  63,046
Total liabilities  1,499,780
Net assets (Exhibit B)  5,950,717
Total liabilities and net assets  $ 7,450,492

For more information, please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Michael Fabricant
PSC Treasurer
THE NAME GAME

This future brought to you by

By PETER HOGNESS and JOSH BROWN

C

colleges and universities have long named buildings or auditori-

ums after large donors in a quid pro quo that never seemed to re-

quire much thought or comment. But a flurry of recent decisions by the CUNY

Board of Trustees takes “naming opportuni-

ties” into new territory.

Now it’s not just bricks and mortar – depart-

ments are also apparently up for grabs. At its January meeting, the Board renamed

Baruch’s Department of Economics “the Bert

Wasserman Department of Economics and Finance.” Along with the college’s “Stan

Ross Department of Accountancy,” it’s now a department with personality.

Baruch students do not yet refer to them-

selves as “majoring in Wasserman” – but they might say that they are “enrolled at

Zicklin” (School of Business), so perhaps the former is just a matter of time.

“Micro-credit” has been a hot concept in international development aid, and some of

the new designations might be called examples of “micro-naming.”

“Resolved, that the Board…approve the

naming of Room 11-276 in the Newman Verti-
cal Campus at Baruch College the “Stewart

Karlinsky Office,’” states a motion adopted

at the Trustees’ February meeting. Room 12-

175 was renamed the “Ernst & Young/Harry

Mancher Classroom,” one of a dozen rooms

renamed in February at Baruch alone.

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

City College topped that number at the

Board’s January meeting, with 13 rooms re-
named. Six of them are in CUNY’s Marshak

Science Building – which is made of rusted

rebar and crumbling concrete, structurally

unsound, and still standing only thanks to the

large steel beams that form girm Xs on its facade at irregular intervals. A while ago,

a large chunk of the Marshak building split

off and fell to earth – so the rash of room re-
namings at Marshak raised a few questions.

Was the Board really hurry to rename the

rooms while they are still there? If a Mar-

shak room falls off the building, will the

donor get his or her money back? Answers

were unavailable at press time.

Many of the names that adorn different

pieces of CUNY, both large and small, belong
to people regarded with affection and re-

going by faculty and staff, people who have

made real contributions to the education of

CUNY students. But the name game is also

a slippery slope, as we slide down that slope we’re picking up speed.

What’s in a name? Here’s a look at

CUNY’s possible future:

May 2008: CUNY Trustees

approve the naming of an

edowed chair in the

Queens College Astronomy
department. While CUNY

colleges already have many

edowed professorships, this

gift breaks new ground: the

endowment will fund a piece of

furniture, the actual chair on

which the professor in Room 3-267

will sit.

“This substantially lowers the bar-

riors to entry for university phi-

anthropy,” said the college’s Chief

Financial Officer, Nick Ellendime.

You may not be able to afford to

dowo a professorship – but you

can still tell your golfing buddies that you’ve endowed a

chair at Queens College.

June 2008: The Board votes to name

next semester’s midterm exams at

Hunter College “the Kaplan Test Prep

Midterms.”

July 2008: Brooklyn College’s Department of

Urban Planning is renamed the “Department of

Trus.”

“This titan of bold development has truly

remade the map of modern cities,” said

the college’s Vice President for Creative

Finance. “In today’s urban landscape, he is

incapacitated. You cannot study today’s

New York City without studying the

career of Donald Trump, and

no one in our new department would dare
to try.”

August 2008: Naming of the John Doe, Jane

Roe, Joe Schmo, Janet Dough, Fred Flow,

Joe Blow, Dorothy Bower, Peter Poe, Joan

Lowe, James Nee, Kate Koh, Jerry Mowe

and Bill Woe Adjunct Faculty Shared Office

Space at BMCC.

Terms of the gift require the University to

continue hiring more adjuncts than full-time

faculty and devote the money saved to raises

for those on CUNY’s Executive Pay Plan.

“It’s money well spent,” said a spokesperson

for the anonymous donors.

September 2008: Baruch’s Bear Strens Class-

room (formerly Room 8-509) is renamed

the JPMorgan Classroom, as part of JPMorgan’s

acquisition of all of Bear Sterns’s assets.

A judge ruled that since the Bear Strens name

was part of the former company’s branding, it constituted a piece of intellectual property

that JPMorgan now rightfully owned.

October 2008: With the unexpected collapse

of JPMorgan into a multi-billion dollar pile

of debt, the JPMorgan Classroom at Baruch

is abruptly renamed Room 8-509. It is ru-

mored on Wall Street that Morgan had in-

vested heavily in complex derivatives based

on the resale of college facility naming

rights, which turned out to have been gross-

ly overvalued.

December 2008: By near-unanimous vote of

the Board of Trustees, a CUNY Law School

classroom at the law school’s 9th and Ed-6

is renamed The Louis Vuitton™ Course on

Counterfeiting and Social Decay.

CUNY spokesperson Andrew Mammon in-

sisted that the naming of the class would not

dictate its content or infringe on academic

freedom: “This much-needed course will ex-

amine how counterfeiting of trademarked
goods leads to a increase in street crime,

rude mannerisms, drug addiction and terrorism, and faculty will be free to impart those

lessons however they wish.”

January 2009: A $43 million donation from the

Tishman Construction wins a promise from CUNY that it will not rename the

rusted, crumbling Mar-

shak Science Building as “the Tishman Center for Structural Integrity.”

“We told Tishman, ‘We’re gonna make you an offer you can’t refuse,’” said the Uni-

versity’s Chief Officer for Strategic Commu-
nication and Enforcement.

“And they accepted it. So, I’d call it a

win-win. They understand that it’s not per-

sonal – it’s business.”

March 2009: In a creative experiment in flexi-

ble pricing, naming rights for a new lecture

hall at the Graduate Center will be awarded on a revolving basis in an ongo-

ing online auction. A large electronic display

on a marquee facing Fifth Avenue will show

the name of the auditorium, which will

change depending on the highest bid for a

given interval of time. The new system was

adopted after a study by the Graduate Cen-

ter’s Development Office indicated that it

would realize far greater returns than the

sale of naming rights on a perennial basis.

May 2009: The naming of the Elliott Spitzer

Center for New York Public Administration.

The former governor, seeking to leave a

more positive legacy in New York’s civic life,

has generously agreed to pay $4,900 per

hour, in perpetuity, to cover personnel costs

associated with the new center. The center

will study the relationship between private
donors and public institutions, and the schol-

arly debate on whether academia has be-

come “the world’s oldest profession.”

Josh Brown is director of the American

Social History Project at the Graduate Center; Peter Hogness is editor of Clarion.

The opinions and sense of humor expressed above are entirely their own.

CALANDAR

SATURDAY, APRIL 26: International Committee meeting. For more in-

formation, contact Renate Briden-

thal, rbriden1@juno.com.

MONDAY, APRIL 27: Ballots for PSC chapter elections must be re-

ceived by this date. (For complete elec-

tion details, see page 6 of the

January 2008 Clarion, at www.psc-

un.org/communications.htm.)

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30: 6:30 pm / Talk by Marc Bouquet, author of

How the University Works (see

page 11): “From ‘I Feel Your Pain’ to
‘You Feel My Problem’ Precarity, University and the

Future of Academic Labor.” Spon-

sored by the Center for the Study of

Culture, Technology and Work. At

the CUNY Graduate Center, 34th Street and Ave-

ence. Sociology Lounge, 6th floor.

FRIDAY, MAY 2: 3:30 pm / Workshop for adjuncts on unemploy-

ment compensation, with speaker from the Workers Defense League. In

the PSC Union Hall, 16th Floor. (Note change in date from previ-

ous announcements) ID is need-

ed to enter the Building. For

more information, contact Marcia

Newfield, (212) 354-1252 or mnewfield

@pscmail.org.

MONDAY MAY 5: 1:00 pm / PSC Re-

tires Chapter meeting. Professor

Marie Gottschalk of the Universi-

ty of Pennsylvania will discuss

universal health care. In the PSC

Union Hall.

FRIDAY, MAY 9: 4:00 pm / “First Fri-

days” meeting of the PSC Part-
time Personnel Committee. At

the PSC office, 61 Broadway, 13th Floor.

For more information, contact

Marcia Newfield, (212) 354-1252 or mnewfield

@pscmail.org.

FRIDAY, MAY 9: 6:00 pm / Labor

Goes to the Movies ends its 07-08

series dedicated to the theme of

censorship and Social Decay. In

the PSC Union Hall, $2 suggested donation.

TUESDAY MAY 20:

RSVPs.

WEDNESDAY MAY 14:

RSVPs.

SUNDAY MAY 25:

RSVPs.

JOSH BROWN

Assistant professor of

Geography at the City College of

New York. His research focuses on

the use of cartography and GIS in

urban and environmental planning.

The opinions and sense of humor

expressed above are entirely their

own.
Low-wage labor and the future of higher education

How The University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation, by Marc Bousquet (NYU Press, 2008)

Reviewed by STANLEY ARONOWITZ
Graduate Center

I
n his first book 30 years ago, CUNY Professor David Nasaw argued that, from its origins in the late 19th cen-
tury, the university education system in the United States has been oriented not chiefly to learning, but to the discipline of young children. Now Marc Bousquet joins a growing chorus of critics of higher education to claim that, far from being an ivory tower, universities are about business: training students for the workforce but also dispensing billions of dollars to politically-connected outside contractors who build facilities and provide services once done by university employees. Universities, he argues, are run along models borrowed from corporate capitalism.

Bousquet, a tenured associate professor at Santa Clara University and an alumnus of the CUNY English PhD program, has been a leading advocate for part-time academic labor under the National Labor Relations Act. Long before the spate of critical studies about universities that have appeared in the past eight or nine years, Bousquet argued that, contrary to its image of a cornucopia for faculty, higher education was increasingly precarious, contingent and low-paid, conditions suffered by much of US labor. Now he has put these insights in a sustained form and, along the way, takes aim at the optimists who mistakenly proclaim that the 21st century would bring an outpouring of tenure-stream jobs in the humanities and the rest of the liberal arts for qualified PhD earners.

NO FLOOD OF JOBS

Instead the retirement of a whole generation of academics from active teaching have not, in the main, produced full-time tenurable jobs. Nor has the era of computer and other technologies resulted in a tendency toward the teachingless curricu-

© 2008 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

p lumination and cost-cutting govern their perspectives on academic labor. Needless to say, in public universities and colleges this policy owes some of its justification to the reluctance of legislators and executive branch politicians to fund universities ade-
quately. But he points out that spending in higher education has not necessarily been drastically reduced. Instead “campus admin-

istrator continue to build new stadiums, restaurants, fitness facilities, media rooms” and more. He suggests that “these huge new building projects [are] financed by thirty years of faculty downsizing...” In this context, distance learning may be un-
derstood, not as a way to innovate educa-
tion, but as a way to cut costs. The claim that part-time faculty in non-tenure track teaching is part-time and low-paid. Like most adjuncts, these precarious workers enjoy few, if any of the amenities of tenure: academic free-

Bousquet shows that, as tenured faculty leave the university, the administration re-

places them with contingent, temporary and part-time teachers. And far from being pro-

fessors-in-training, graduate teaching assist-
ants are now aware of cheap labor which accounts for universities’ willingness to admit large numbers into PhD programs even when job prospects remain dim. Bas-
ing his conclusions on well-known statistics showing that part-timers, both in their ab-
solute numbers and the number of courses they teach at the undergraduate level, have outstripped those of the tenured faculty, he believes that the cutting-edge agents of change for the present and future of higher education are no longer the full-
timers, but that the baton has passed to per-
carious, contingent labor.

CORPORATE MODEL

The reason for this turn of events over the last 30 years is, chiefly, that university management has adopted a corporate capi-
talist model of operations in which cost containment and cost-cutting govern their perspectives on academic labor. Needless to say, in public universities and colleges this policy owes some of its justification to the reluctance of legislators and executive branch politicians to fund universities ade-
quately. But he points out that spending in higher education has not necessarily been drastically reduced. Instead “campus admin-

Cost cutting rules academia now

Ephemeral “partnership” with management and its corporate allies. Bousquet argues that shared govern-

ance has meant that fac-

tulty identify with the institution rather than academic labor, especially those at the bottom of the hierarchy who have struggled to make their voices heard and their demands for equity met.

His evaluation of facult

y unionism is, therefore, quite harsh. While he re-


tes writes critics like Har-

vard’s Derek Bok and California’s Clark Kerr, who view unions as unim-

influential when not dan-

grous to the academic enterprise, he is generally pessimistic regarding the question of whether the two major unions in high-
er education – AFT and NEA – possess the politi-

cal will, let alone the vi-

sion, to embrace the cause of contingent labor. Based on a solid reading of recent history, he shows that faculty unionism remains parochial when not downright my-

opic concerning the needs of the three million employees of higher edu-

cation institutions. Moreover, unionism in higher education is divided by full and part-
time faculty, research and teaching institutions, and different unions with different priorities.

In the squeeze, students are consistently short-changed by overstuffed classes and the plethora of contingent faculty who have little time to spare for them and worn down by the burdens of rising tuition and, in most instances, the need to engage in wage-labor to put themselves through school.

Bousquet bemoans the lack of solidarity among the rank and file of universities. In contrast, management has coalesced into a new “caste” and has exhibited remarkable solidarity around its interests. As a result, despite heroic efforts by many teachers to buck the tide, the university has become a graveyard of genuine education.

It may be too much to ask a critic who paints this gloomy picture to suggest ways out of the quandary. Yet this book, whose in-
dictment is persuasive and eloquently laid out, could have benefited from a speculative chapter that discussed strategies for change. I do not make this suggestion in or-
der to undercut Bousquet’s bold, realistic assessment. The problem is that absent a discourse of alternatives, its effect may be to reinforce the sense of hopelessness that al-

ready pervades the professoriate. So it is up to activists in university unions to take up the challenge posed by Bousquet’s analysis – to develop new strategic thinking for acad-

emic labor.
The failing flagship ‘strategy’

Public universities: what role?

By GARY RHoades

From one university to the next, presidents and provosts are all talking about being “strategic.” They’re suggesting that we need to make tough choices. And they’re seeking to enhance the standing of those universities.

Take the case of my university, which is the flagship, at least for the moment, of Arizona. Our new president and our previous president are talking about our school becoming a top ten public research university. In the case of CUNY, which bills itself as “the leading urban public university in the country,” your chancellor is talking about creating a flagship environment. (I gather he’s not creating a flagship environment on teaching loads and salaries.)

Distinctive

What’s remarkable about this national pattern is that everybody is talking about being “strategic,” and yet we’re all kind of going in the same direction. For the most part, the choices are not all that tough or strategic because they’re so similar. They simply consist of imitating more highly ranked universities. Rather than trying to be what our universities can never truly be and ending up at best superficial, indistinct, Xerox copies of the elite, we should instead work to find sustainable, distinctive niches that will set us apart and that will enable us and our communities to thrive.

It is absolutely essential that the faculty and professionals who do the work of these places, who are connected to and understand and are committed to the communities in which they work and live, articulate that alternative path—that niche and place of historical and comparative advantage.

There’s a wonderful report out, written not by a sociologist, not by radical political scientists, but issued by the Education Trust and sponsored by the Lumina Foundation. The title of this report is quite suggestive, *Engines Of Inequality*. The subtitle is even clearer and essentially appropriate: *Diminishing Equity in the Nation’s Premier Public Universities*. It’s an analysis of each flagship university in each of the 50 states.

Here’s the pattern, and it will sound very familiar to you: less access over time for under-represented minorities. At other colleges and universities, as you might expect, 24% of students are from under-represented student populations, but at flagship universities the number is half that, 12%.

Academic Capitalism

If you look at low-income students, the news is even worse; 44 of 50 flagship states have reduced access relative to other universities.

At AU, when we look at a poor student of color south of 6th Street, which is our dividing line in Tucson, we say, “They cost us money.” They may be smart but we have to give them financial aid. They cost us money, the tuition is lower, then we give them financial aid, hell, we’re not making anything out of these people. That’s what academic capitalism is. You begin to see dollar signs in the place of your students.

We are a low-income state; 25% of children in Arizona live in poverty. There are school districts where two-thirds of the children do not have health care at all. We don’t need a Stanford in southern Arizona. We don’t need some place that takes the children of the upper middle class and translates them into upper middle-class professionals.

We need a place that takes first generation students from working, lower middle-class backgrounds and moves them into a middle class of color, an immigrant middle class. That would be a distinctive mission and niche. That would set us apart from our aspirational peers. We could do that but we are not.

Neither is CUNY.

So what’s the pattern at CUNY? Obviously, an increase in in-state tuition; an increase in traditional standards of entry; heightened stratification of students: an investment in honor colleges and a decline in the number of SEEK students; heightened stratification of colleges within CUNY and management by objectives for each of those colleges; increased stratification in performance-based management; tiering the system into highly selective, moderately selective and open access; and eliminating remediation from the senior colleges and instituting a CUNY proficiency exam in very traditional terms. Who is the focus? Students who would otherwise have gone to top colleges in the country, top Ivies.

That’s great. Not all of those honor students are the same people, but mostly they’re similar. As the father of two daughters, 20 and 21, who have earned honors at various educational levels at UCLA and Brown, I believe there is a very important role for honors students and no institution ought to turn their back on honors students.

Inclusion

But historically CUNY made its mark not because of who it excluded but because of who it included. More than that – because of the quality of the professionals providing education to all New Yorkers. The CUNY proposition has been that the public good will be served by providing high quality professors and professionals to all in the city who seek a college education. Your legacy and your genius are not to out-compete Harvard and Columbia but to all in the city that seek a college education. That would be a distinctive niche.

Moving working-class students into the middle class is a distinctive niche.

That’s not hard to understand why the presidents are the way they are. For example, when the new chancellor of a college in the California State University system met with the mayor in the town in which the college is located, the mayor’s first question was, “So you’re gonna make us like a UC, right?”

Excellence Redefined

The presidents are working within a circle and within a society that values growth, mobility, rankings, moving up. And part of challenging that system is challenging the discourse about what constitutes a really excellent place of higher education.

This is a nationwide issue. They’re all speaking with each other but they’re also all feeling like, this is what we’re supposed to do, this is the program, there’s no other choice. So I think we need to give them other choices and define them as feasible. The challenge is really to question that discourse and provide an alternative.

Gary Rhoades is a professor at the University of Arizona and director of its Center for the Study of Higher Education. This article is adapted from his presentation at the PSC’s leadership training in March. (See article on page 2.)