On November 4, Albert Sherman, chair of the College Lab Technicians chapter, joined other union delegates in voting to approve a package of contract demands by a wide margin. The PSC's bargaining agenda for a new contract was a product of months of discussion throughout the union. To turn these demands into a reality, more than 700 PSC members have joined the Committee of 500, a group of rank-and-file activists that will meet via conference call on November 30.
Contract campaign conference call

By JOHN TARLETON

The PSC’s Committee of 500 may soon need to change its name: it’s grown to more than 700 members since the start of the new academic year. And on Tuesday, November 30, a conference call will connect these activists with members of the PSC bargaining team, and each other, as they discuss how to create a powerful campaign for a new union contract.

BUILDING POWER

The Committee of 500 was launched last spring to help the union build the power it needs to win a fair contract during tough economic and political times. PSC members who join the Committee of 500 can start doing things to talk to a couple of CUNY colleagues about their priorities for a new contract; communicate with colleagues about negotiations; attend at least one bargaining session; encourage CUNY friends and colleagues to participate in public actions; and recruit at least one other PSC member to join the Committee. (If you’d like to join, you can sign up online at www.psc-cuny.org/Committee500/signup.htm.)

During the November 30 conference call, which will run from 7:30 to 8:30 pm, PSC negotiators, including President Barbara Bowen, will discuss the union’s bargaining agenda and the kind of campaign that it requires.

They’ll also discuss what’s ahead for the Committee of 500, and the next organizing task that committee members will be asked to carry out. Most of the time on the conference call will be dedicated to questions from Committee of 500 members.

“We’re trying something new with this call: a virtual meeting. If it works we may do it more often. You’ll be able to call in your questions and then hear them answered, and add your ideas to an important discussion of strategy,” Bowen said.

Ken Estey, an assistant professor of political science at Brooklyn College, said he was looking forward to the conference call and taking an active role in the contract campaign.

“I believe deeply in member-to-member organizing,” Estey told Clarion. “The Committee of 500 creates the conditions for a union that is fully participatory.”

SIMPLE TASKS

The fact that Committee of 500 members are asked to do simple, straightforward tasks that don’t require a lot of time is also appealing to Estey, who is the director of BC’s Studies in Religion Program. “It gives me a chance to do something tangible to help my union that is significant, but not overwhelming,” he said.

Committee of 500 member Daniel Shaw teaches three courses per semester as an adjunct at York and John Jay and leads anti-bullying and gang awareness workshops in 50 public schools a year, while also raising two young children.

Shaw said he loves teaching college-level courses on race and cultural diversity that help students learn to think critically about these issues. But he adds that earning $8,800 per semester for teaching 140 students is unsustainable. “How am I supposed to survive on $20,000 per year and pay the rent?”

Shaw told Clarion he joined the Committee of 500 because “we’re looking for more adjuncs to step up so we can put more leverage on CUNY.” Mutual support among union members is the key, Shaw said. “Unity and organizing is the only way change has ever been made.”

To join the Committee of 500 and participate in the November 30 conference call, send an e-mail to committee500@pscmail.org.

Extra workload not so sweet, faculty say

By JOHN TARLETON

Full-time faculty at City Tech are required to teach 24 credit hours per year, while the requirement at other senior colleges is 21. For years CUNY management has said it can’t afford to eliminate this inequity. So on November 4 PSC activists on campus decided to lend a symbolic donation of 21 cents.

The goal was to call attention to the past due time for CUNY to treat us the same as at all colleges in upcoming contract negotiations (see center section). Bringing the campaign for City Tech in line with other senior colleges is also part of the PSC’s current contract demands.

CUNY’s teaching load is too high across the board, said Bob Cermele, City Tech’s union chapter chair, and for that reason the union is seeking a restructuring of faculty workload at all colleges in upcoming contract negotiations.

During the November 30 conference call, members were invited to a couple of CUNY colleagues working on class load reduction for their students to talk about their priorities for a new union contract. They could not attend the call but could ask questions online at www.psc-cuny.org/Committee500/signup.htm.

Associate Professor Costas Panayotakis (center) at the union’s November 4 ‘bake sale,’ discussing what higher course loads mean for faculty and students at City Tech.

Original community college, City Tech became a senior college in 1980 – but its teaching load did not change until the PSC pressed the issue in negotiations. Teaching load was reduced from 27 to 26 hours in the 2002 contract and reduced again to 24 hours in 2006.

“Unity and organizing is the only thing tangible to help my union that is significant, but not overwhelming,” he said.

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Bake sale’ for equity at City Tech

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On November 4, in a packed meeting attended by more than 200 people, the PSC Delegate Assembly adopted a bargaining agenda for negotiations on a new contract.

In addition to 115 delegates and alternates, about 100 other PSC members attended. Most observers came to voice support for the urgent need for advancing tenure and students working together for a new contract.

Delegates voted on a set of demands recommended by the PSC Executive Council, and approved the package by a wide margin. Following the union’s revised priorities, it includes demands on competitive salaries; restructuring full-time faculty workload; pay parity and job security for adjuncts; and for advocates for those in Higher Education Officer titles (HEOs); specific needs of groups such as library and law school faculty; and other improvements such as tuition waivers at CUNY for employees’ children. (See page 465 in center for complete demands.)

The meeting began with an introduction of the union’s bargaining team and a summary of the proposed demands, before moving into discussion and debate. On full-time faculty workload, “we propose that it be restructuring,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “No one in the faculty is asking to work less. We’re just asking to be able to do more at the things that make a difference,” she explained. “The one thing our students need most is time with their faculty. Our full-time faculty should enable us to spend time with students; instead, it prevents it.”

**TIME**

In addition to a CUNY-wide change in the number of credit hours taught, demands for a CCE would be guaranteed a minimum assignment of six hours per class, and a statement of reasons required for all non-reappointments.

On pay parity, adjuncts currently earn far less than full-time lecturers per classroom hour. The demands put forward by the EC for substantial, measurable progress toward proportionality from the full-time lecturers’ title, “through increased hourly pay, longevity increments, and/or converting long-serving adjuncts to full-time positions.”

Many of the organizers had signed a petition focused on demands for adjunct equity, which received 1,400 signatures in the weeks before the Drafted before the EC’s proposed demands were announced, it took a different approach on certain points, and Baruch delegate Douglas Medina proposed that the EC’s demands be revised to incorporate the petition’s demands.

**SECURITY**

On job security, the petition called for a primary system for adjuncts, all adjunct appointments to be for a minimum of three years and a statement of reasons required for all non-reappointments. Holly Clarke, an adjunct and a delegate from John Jay, argued that in the EC’s proposal, “there is nothing that strengthens job security within the first [seven] years. And that’s a large omission. We need a bridge to the CCE.”

**STRATEGIC**

“I certainly understand the question that Holly is raising,” said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, also a bargaining team member. “But it’s also true that to advance a job security proposal, we’re going to need full-time faculty and department chairs…supporting this proposal on the ground, on the campuses, within their departments,” he said. “I think they will support it, in part because they will see analogues with the full-time faculty process and the progression to job security for lecturers and our proposal, under which the same thing would be available for part-timers.”

“As we think about our demands,” Fabricant emphasized, “we also need to think about how we will build the power to advance them as part of a strategic agenda.”

On pay equity, the petition called for a $1 increase in all adjuncts’ hourly pay, and for annual step increases. “I think that we need to make increased hourly pay not just one possible option… but the choice method to close the pay gap for all contingent faculty,” said Carl Lindskog, an EC member who favored the idea.

“It’s the best way to dismantle the structure of the two-tier system,” said Carl Lindskog. “Measures such as longevity increments, which focus on longer-serving adjuncts, would leave other adjuncts farther behind in relative terms, he added.”

“Diminishing the two-tier system requires that you close the gap between full-time and part-time faculty,” said John-Jay’s Clarke. “We need to do that gap because it makes it more expensive to hire adjuncts and it strengthens our rationale to hire part-time faculty members.”

PSC First Vice President Steve London countered that the demand formulated by the bargaining team allows for combining different approaches in the most effective way. The amendment, he said, would take the economic package “and spread that money across a very large group instead of targeting it.”

London noted that a large segment of current adjuncts also hold full-time jobs or collect a pension, including full-time CUNY faculty who teach overload courses. “So you’re going to take a limited resource and give [much] of it to people who have full-time jobs or incomes that are substantial,” he said. “That will leave less for those who need the money most. I think that is problematic from the perspective of justice for adjuncts.”

“Giving union negotiators a variety of tools will get a better result, London said. In the end the amendment failed, on a vote of 25-73. After some further discussion on other issues, from salary steps to tuition waivers, the entire bargaining agenda proposed by the EC was approved by a wide margin, with 86 votes in favor and 11 against.

**SCHEDULE**

With the union’s contract demands now established, the PSC has written to CUNY representatives about scheduling the first bargaining sessions. Initial bargaining sessions usually focus on procedural questions and initial presentations of both sides’ demands.

“Thank you to everyone who came tonight, who organized and spoke out for their point of view,” Bowen said after the meeting’s conclusion. “Now let’s get to work on this together. Let’s go forward with an agenda where full-timers and part-timers support each other. Let’s organize to win.”

**Delegates OK union demands**

Contract bargaining agenda

By PETER HOGNESS

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Grassroots action by the PSC and other unions across the country held the post of pro-union, pro-CUNY candidates, in a year when Republicans racked up electoral gains with calls for cuts in public spending.

“I believe in movement politics,” said Attorney General-elect Eric Schneiderman. “This was a campaign of activists — and boy, did we show what activists can do.” Schneiderman’s 55-44% victory came with strong backing from the PSC and other unions, tenant organizations and groups dedicated to equal rights for all. “Our victory...proves that if you are willing to speak up for justice, if you are willing to speak the basic truths that define what Democrats are supposed to be about, you can win an election, [even in] what is supposed to be a year when conservatives are swept in.”

MARGIN OF VICTORY

Compatriot Tom DiNapoli won by 50-47% with a campaign that hit hard at his main opponent’s coy relationship with Wall Street. A pro-union postition, he won the contests for both offices as toss-ups, with all leading candidates tied at 44%. Union-based get-out-the-vote operations were a big reason that candidates hostile to public workers lost both contests. DiNapoli’s winning margin in a closer race was provided by votes he received on the Working Families Party line.

Efforts by the PSC and other unions also made the difference in a State Senate upset in Queens, where Tony Avella, a strong advocate for public education, defeated anti-immigrant State Sen. Frank Padavan. Avella’s win against a 38-year incumbent was based on grassroots organization and his broader appeal in a district that is becoming more diverse.

“People says to me, ‘Joan Gregg, we want you on City Tech’,” said Joan Gregg, a retired professor from City Tech who knocked on doors for Avella with other members of the PSC and UFT. “One guy, who was very interested in Avella’s support for education, said, ‘You’re teachers? You’re my heroes.’” Gregg recalled. “It brought tears to my eyes, because you certainly don’t hear that in the media.”

Avella lost no time in putting his victory to work. After Mayor Bloomberg named publishing executive Cathy Black as his next schools chancellor, Avella was the first elected official to ask the State Education Commissioner about Black the waiver that someone with her lack of experience in education would need in order to hold that position.

“We’re at a point where we want to develop a living wage ($10 per hour and extend them to all Wal-Mart workers hired there. For more information, see livingwagenyc.org. (A friend of public ed wins big in Queens.

“I want to congratulate PSC activists for the role they played in this election,” said PSC First Vice President Steve London. “The State Senate does result in a 31-31 tie, we will have played an important role in preventing a Republican State Senate, which would have negative consequences for CUNY funding. We worked closely with the UFT, together we made a real difference in this race.”

Like other unions and education activists, the PSC faces a tough political year in 2011. But the PSC can take some satisfaction in helping candidates like Schneiderman, Avella and others win a bigger swing against the tide in 2010.
The PSC’s bargaining agenda

An alternative to scarcity

Dear Members,

I am pleased to present the PSC’s agenda for the upcoming round of collective bargaining. The bargaining agenda that follows was unanimously recommended by the union’s negotiating committee and overwhelmingly approved by the Delegate Assembly. It is the product of the efforts of hundreds of members listening to members’ contract priorities the union has undertaken. It draws on discussions by members at open contract meetings on every campus, a member survey on faculty working conditions, hundreds of comments by individual members, more than 200 interviews conducted by the Committee of 500, and a special Delegate Assembly devoted to comments on the contract.

The wide-ranging discussions revealed a surprising level of consensus. Members are determined not to undo the progress the PSC has made through the last three contracts – securing salary increases right before the recession, maintaining health benefits, gaining paid parental leave, creating professional development funds, and more. They see some ways of improving our professional lives through measures that cost little or nothing – such as tuition waivers for our children who attend CUNY. And they are determined to move forward on the union’s multi-year agenda for deep, structural change in our working conditions and our students’ learning conditions.

Defending public higher education calls for an ambitious bargaining agenda

CUNY faculty and staff are aware of the economic and political realities we face as we enter this round of bargaining. Many of us teach and write on exactly these issues. But we have not done it – in part on the strength of our contracts. Nor will we accept riding out the recession by increasing CUNY’s exploitation of contingent and part-time employees. For the first time in my experience as PSC president, I have heard a shared recognition among members that we cannot fix academic labor issues at CUNY if we do not fix the abusive system of adjunct labor.

How do we do all this at a time when government-elect has opted opportunistically to declare that public employees are the root of the State’s budget crisis? Or when the newly elected Republican majority in the House of Representatives will seek to block a second federal stimulus bill? Or when the mayor has violated an unspoken rule of collective bargaining and announced that he plans to deny raises for the UFT that were already negotiated by other unions?

Our answer is to be strategic, imaginative and strong.

Strategic, imaginative and strong

Our answer is to be strategic, imaginative and strong. It is also to work simultaneously in multiple areas. As we advance our agenda at the bargaining table, the PSC will be fighting to change the political conditions that underlie the clamor for austerity that we will hear about at the bargaining table is not an act of nature; it was created by political policies, and can be reversed by political policies. The PSC is part of a growing coalition pressing Albany for alternatives to imposing austerity on public workers and the vast public we serve.

I do not underestimate what it will take to change the agenda in Albany. New York State’s conservative drift is part of a national and even global push to diminish the public sector and concentrate wealth to an unprecedented degree in the hands of the rich. But our fight for a fair contract begins here. The union has a potential breakthrough. Members are determined by the Committee of 500, and a special Delegate Assembly devoted to comments on the contract. We refuse to accept scarcity for our students, or ourselves. This bargaining agenda is about defending the quality of education at CUNY at a time when many assume that it will be eroded. And it is about daring to imagine that we can help students.

It also takes the opportunity to address a number of smaller issues, some of which have no cost at all, others that could easily be addressed in this round. We propose a labor/activity planning task force to assist members with access to affordable housing and childcare; an increase to the annual leave that would let members prep for teaching, an innovative student mentoring program that would shift some of our resources to underrepresented groups. We also call for additional support for department chairs, as their workload grows to dysfunctional proportions. We advance a coherent agenda on the quality of education at CUNY, the quality of education we offer our students.

The full-time faculty workload at both the senior and community colleges urgently needs to be restructured. Our heavy teaching loads actually work against student success. Faculty need to be freed to spend more time with individual students. There is ample evidence that a chief factor in increasing student retention and graduation rates – a goal we share with management – is time for one-on-one attention by faculty. Faculty at CUNY rarely have such time, as we cope with a heavy teaching schedule, overcrowded classrooms, increased demands for research and outside funding, and multiply administrative initiatives in which we are presssed to participate.

The direct way to restructure the full-time faculty workload would be to introduce a more manageable teaching load, one in line with other universities that make comparable research and teaching demands. Hence we propose a three-credit reduction in the annual teaching load for all colleges, for all full-time faculty. But we also offer additional ways to restructure our work. We call for strict adherence to departmental class size limits – and an extra compensation for them if they are exceeded; we propose an innovative student mentoring program that would shift some of our time from overcrowded classrooms to individual meetings; and we offer pioneering demands that support the extra time required to introduce educational technologies and distance learning.

The union’s goals

● address the current bargaining climate through a strategic approach to union priorities
● maintain progress on competitive salaries
● restructure full-time faculty workload to allow more time for students and research, and improve student retention
● achieve substantial movement toward parity and job stability for adjuncts
● create a process for advancement for HEAs
● address long-standing inequities (library faculty, law school, and others)
● improve the working lives of faculty & staff, often through low- or no-cost measures such as tuition waivers
● take other steps to improve professional life and strengthen labor relations at CUNY

Reconstructing the full-time faculty workload to support student success

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Continued from page A4
IMPORTANT NOTE: the demands are listed below by category. The order of the list is not intended to reflect priority.

COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION

1. Salary Increases: All members of the bargaining unit, including bargaining unit members employed at the Educational Opportunity Centers and in Continuing Education series titles, shall receive per annum across-the-board salary increases, compounded. (Article 24)

2. Movement in Steps: For full-time employees, the five-year-step and the seven-year-step shall be converted to one-year steps. For adjunct and hourly employees whose salary schedules are covered in Article 24, movement from the penultimate and ante penultimate steps will take place after one year. (Article 24)

3. Movement toward Adjacent Salary Parity: The University shall make substantial, measurable progress toward parity for part-time teaching adjuncts, based on proportionality with the full-time Lecturer title, through one or a combination of the following measures: increased hourly pay, longevity increments, an initiative for conversion of teaching adjuncts who have met appropriate eligibility requirements to full-time positions. (Article 24)

4. Regularize Salary Schedules: A schedule of salary steps shall be introduced for all Research Associates, for all CUNY Law School full-time and part-time faculty (with the exception of Distinguished Lecturer-Law School), for all full-time Medical professor title employees (with the exception of Distinguished Lecturer, Medical Series), and for the Medical Lecturer position. (Articles 35, 34 and 24).

5. Salary Differential for College Laboratory Technicians and Assistants to HEO: The salary differential for College Laboratory Technicians series employees and Assistants to HEO who have earned Master’s or doctoral degrees from an accredited institution in a field related to their job duties shall be increased. (Article 24)

6. Nighttime, Weekend and “Stand-By” Differentials: Employees in the Higher Education Officer series, the College Laboratory Technician series and the Registrar series who are assigned, as part of their scheduled workweek, to work on Saturday or Sunday or to work later than 5:00 p.m. on a weekday shall receive a pay differential for the hours assigned outside of normal business hours. Employees in the titles above who are required to remain on standby or on-call status for hours in addition to their normal workweek shall receive appropriate additional compensation.

7. New Full-Time Faculty: New full-time faculty members whose initial appointment is on September 1 of any given year shall be placed on payroll on August 1 of that year. In order to enable them to complete the advance preparation required for assuming a new faculty position. New full-time faculty whose teaching appointment begins on February 1 of any given year shall be placed on payroll on January 1 of that year.

8. Welfare Fund Enhancements and Equity in Adjunct Health Insurance: There shall be a substantial increase in contributions to the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund for all active and retired members of the bargaining unit, including employees at the Educational Opportunity Centers. Eligible part-time instructional staff members shall be included in the New York City Health Benefits Program. (Article 26)

9. Educational Opportunity Centers: Salary parity with the other units of the City University in comparable positions shall be maintained. The Supplemental Agreement on Educational Opportunity Centers shall be amended to improve certain working conditions and benefits. (Supplemental Agreement on Educational Opportunity Centers)

10. Hunter Campus Schools: Improvements shall be made in the terms and conditions of the employees in the bargaining unit at the Hunter Campus Schools, including through enhancing the salary for Assistant Teachers. (Article 24)

11. Pension Equity: The University shall provide part-time instructional staff with the option to participate in the Optional Retirement Programs.

12. CLUP Instructors: Teachers in the CUNY Language Immersion Program shall be placed in full-time positions under Article 3 (or in a newly established full-time position) on the appropriate salary schedule, with all the rights and benefits of full-time employees. (Article 1)

WORKLOADS THAT SUPPORT QUALITY EDUCATION

13. Full-Time Faculty Workload: The workload of full-time teaching faculty shall be restructured to enhance the quality of education, to support improved student retention and graduation rates, and to allow faculty to contribute meaningfully to the academic community through research, scholarship and creative work. As part of accomplishing this goal, the maximum teaching load for full-time faculty at all colleges shall be reduced by 3 teaching contact hour credits annually. (Article 15 and Appendix A)

14. Class Size: In the event the University violates departmental class size limits without the written consent of both the instructor and the department chair, full-time instructors shall be credited with additional teaching contact hour credits equivalent to the number of teaching contact hours of the course, part-time instructors shall receive equivalent compensation.

15. Support for Student Mentoring: Full-time faculty who choose to participate in a student mentoring program to be designed jointly by the parties shall receive teaching contact hour credits for mentoring five students per semester. Both faculty and student participants will be required to participate in assessment and accountability measures designed by the parties.

16. Library Faculty: All Library faculty, regardless of when hired, shall have the same number of annual leave days as other full-time faculty. Effective on the date on which Article 14.3 b) is changed to provide annual leave for Library faculty equivalent to the annual leave of other full-time faculty, Library faculty professional development leaves shall be discontinued. (Articles 14 and 25)

17. Additional Support for Department Chairs: Department chairs (and, where appropriate, their deputies) shall receive additional support through provision of one or a combination of the following: additional reassigned time, additional financial compensation, and additional access to support personnel.

18. Educational Technology and Distance Learning: The use of Educational Technology and Distance Learning by instructional staff members falls within contractual provisions, but its special impact on certain terms and conditions of employment needs to be further addressed through collective bargaining. Educational Technology and Distance Learning (ET and DL) shall be understood to include but not be limited to: web-assisted courses, asynchronous courses, and hybrid courses. Instructional staff shall receive adequate compensation (in either salary or credit for time, or both) for the professional development, course development and additional instructional time that is required by the use of ET and DL.

Instructional staff shall have the right to:

Ownership of their work product
Control of the rebroadcast of their work product
Adequate technological support services to deliver course content
Selection of the teaching platform most appropriate for their work
Continued and expanded use of University resources to create and support the CUNY Academic Commons and other similar faculty-driven endeavors.

An Educational Technology and Distance Learning Labor/Management Committee shall be estab-
23. Tuition Waivers: 1) Children and stepchildren of full-time members of the instructional staff shall be granted tuition waivers for undergraduate courses at CUNY. 2) The eligibility requirement for tuition waivers for teaching adjuncts shall be reduced from ten semesters to six, and may be established through service CUNY-wide. 3) Non-teaching adjuncts who have worked at least 6 hours per week at the same college for 6 consecutive semesters (not including the summer session), and who have been appointed to work at least 6 hours per week a full or spring semester shall be granted tuition waivers for up to one course that semester. 4) Substitutes shall immediately proceed by and immediately followed by adjunct service shall be counted as continuous service for the purpose of determining eligibility for tuition remission. (Article 28)

24. Paid Parental Leave: The pilot program for paid parental leave, signed into agreement on March 9, 2009, shall be established as a permanent program and enhanced. (Article 16)

25. PSC-CUNY Awards: The contribution to the PSC-CUNY Awards program shall be increased by at least $500,000. (Article 25)

26. Increasing Racial, Ethnic and Gender Diversity: A Diverse Faculty Recruitment and Retention Fund of $500,000 shall be established to assist academic departments in recruiting and retaining full-time faculty from underrepresented groups, bringing candidates from such groups to campus, and undertaking other initiatives to increase diversity.

27. Improved Access to Childcare and Housing: A labor-management task force shall be formed to address the urgent need to provide improved access to affordable housing in the New York City area, especially for new members of the faculty and staff, and access to high-quality, affordable childcare for all relevant members of the bargaining unit. (Article 12)

28. Adjunct Professional Development Fund: The Adjunct Professional Development Fund shall be made permanent, supported by recurring funds, and non-teaching adjuncts who meet eligibility requirements agreed to by the parties shall be entitled to apply for grants from the Fund. (Appendix C)

29. Health and Safety: Article 39.1 shall be amended to add the following requirement for the City University: to furnish to each of its employees a place of employment free of physical environmental conditions that interfere with teaching and learning or with the ability of employees to perform their assigned duties; and to require that new construction and large renovation projects conform to AIA/HRAE standards. Article 39.2 shall be amended to establish Health Safety and Food Safety committees at each college, and to establish the requirement that the college president or highest college official with responsibility for health and safety meet twice each semester with the campus committee. (Article 39)

30. Bereavement Leave: All full-time instructional staff members shall be entitled to five days of paid bereavement leave for a death in the immediate family defined as spouse, domestic partner, parent, stepparent, child, stepchild, sibling, grandparent or grandchild. In the case of death of an employee for a death in the immediate family, the leave provided for part-time instructional staff named in Article 14.1 shall be available without the need for a request. (Article 14)

EQUITY, ENHANCEMENTS, GRIEVANCES AND DISCIPLINE

31. Graduate Employees: The University shall support the Union's effort to achieve improvements in the benefits available to graduate employees under NYSSHP.

Graduate Assistants shall receive appropriate University-wide credit toward movement in salary schedule when they are appointed to adjunct positions. A labor-management committee shall be formed to explore ways of enhancing opportunities for full-time faculty appointments for recipients of the Ph.D. degree from CUNY, especially for Ph.D. recipients from underrepresented racial, ethnic and gender groups.

32. Part-Time Instructional Staff: Teaching adjuncts who have taught for at least 5 of the preceding 7 semesters, and non-teaching adjuncts who have been appointed for at least six hours per week during 5 of the preceding 7 semesters, shall accrue sick leave.

An employee currently serving in a Substitute title who is subsequently appointed to an adjunct title shall receive written notice of appointment on the same schedule as an employee currently serving in an adjunct title. (Article 10.1(a))

The University shall provide the first paycheck of the semester for part-time instructional staff not later than 3 weeks after the first day of the semester; employees for whom a paycheck is not provided by the paycheck date shall receive an immediate advance of 80 percent of the gross salary due on the paycheck date and a similar advance for any subsequent period or periods for which paychecks are not provided. The balance due to the employee for each pay period shall be paid in the first regular paycheck.

33. Continuing Education Teachers: The Supplemental Agreement on Continuing Education shall be amended to include provisions for regular observations and evaluations of Continuing Education faculty, consistent with Articles 18 and 19 of the Agreement. (Article 20 of the Agreement)

34. Increased Reassigned Time for Union Work: The PSC shall be granted reassigned time for negotiation of successor agreements, in addition to the reassigned time for handling of grievances and implementation of Article 20 of the Agreement. The additional reassigned time shall be granted during periods when successor agreements are being negotiated, and shall be allocated by the PSC to bargaining unit members who participate in collective bargaining with the University. (Article 6)

35. Appointment, Evaluation, Grievance and Discipline: Appointment and Non-Reappointment: The following shall be added to both Article 9.8 and Article 9.18: “If after ten (10) calendar days, as above, the written statement of reasons has not been furnished to the affected employee, the employee shall be deemed reappointed for one year.”

The time bar to complaint regarding non-compliance under 18.2(b,2) or c) and 18.3 shall be removed by deleting the third sentence of Article 18.2(b,2) and the third sentence of Article 18.3(d).

Article 20.4 shall be amended to allow 60 working days to file a grievance.

If the University fails to render a Step One or Step Two grievance decision within the contractual time period, the grievance shall be deemed sustained.

A new section, 20.9, shall be added: “In all investigative circumstances and any situations that could reasonably lead to future discipline, employees must be told of their rights to union representation.”

The following shall be deleted from Article 21.1: staff in HEO series titles shall be subject to discharge as provided in Article 21.9, and all of 21.9 shall be deleted.

The file of an employee shall be added, either to 21.1, or as a new section, 21.14: “Any and all actions resulting from any and all internal investigatory procedures pursuant to any University policy must proceed through Article 21, and, in all investigative circumstances and any situations that could reasonably lead to future discipline, employees must be told of their rights to union representation.”

Note: The Professional Staff Congress reserves the right to amend or supplement these demands during the course of collective bargaining.
An alternative for CUNY

Continued from page A1

Learning, CUNY’s research expectations - for both the community and senior colleges - are at odds with its usually heavy teaching load. While we embrace high standards of scholarship, we recognize that those standards either ring hollow or lead to burn-out if they are not accompanied by conditions in which they can be met. Restructuring the full-time faculty workload would in fact increase productivity, if productivity is understood to mean contributing to the learning and the production of new knowledge.

Opening a path to advancement for Higher Education Officer employees

There are more than 3,000 professional staff in the Higher Education Officer series at CUNY, and they are the only major group of PSC members who work under a system of classification rather than promotion. HEOS provide essential services to students and colleges. They are financial aid counselors, registrars, program directors and technology personnel. To move to a higher position, HEOS who have not yet reached the top classification must either attain a new, different job at CUNY or show that their current job has changed so significantly that it is now in a higher category. We believe that every employee should have a transparent path to advancement.

For the first time, we propose in this set of demands an additional route to career advancement for HEOS who are not in the highest classification. While also calling for improvements in the current classification process, we propose a system to enable advancement based on the recommendation of peers. For many HEOS, the experience of being at CUNY is an experience of frustration and disrespect. Despite ballooning workloads as enrollment rises and retirees are not replaced, HEOS have few avenues for professional advancement, increased salary and respect.

The demand for a system of job security is new, and carries no cost. It is a considered proposal to stabilize the faculty workforce by allowing adjuncts who have taught for a significant period and who successfully complete a rigorous review to retain the right to teach at CUNY after a meeting on the contract that was held at John Jay College, a young faculty member said to me after a meeting on the contract that he was glad the union had decided “not to meet scarcity with scarcity.” If unions in this economic moment do not demand an alternative to scarcity, who will?

It is in the best tradition of labor unions to refuse to accept austerity for working people, and in the best tradition of the academy to question received wisdom. Those are the traditions we hope to unite. We should continue to press for new professorial lines, as well as investment in the faculty CUNY has.

An alternative to scarcity

The primary goal for the bargaining team was to develop a coherent agenda that would unite the concerns of our membership and uphold the principle that public higher education cannot be sacrificed to economic austerity. We ask you to consider the attached document as a whole – as an agenda for the union – and not just as a set of independent demands.

Last week at John Jay College, a young faculty member said to me after a meeting on the contract that he was glad the union had decided “not to meet scarcity with scarcity.” If unions in this economic moment do not demand an alternative to scarcity, who will?

In solidarity,

Barbara Bowen
President, PSC

In solidarity,
PSC files grievance for adjunct pay

By PETER ROGNESS

This semester, CUNY has been re-
fusing to pay some adjuncts for all the hours they have worked. For
 adjuncts assigned a teaching load in
excess of contractual limits, the
University has refused to pay them
for those additional hours unless a
waiver is signed. Failure to pay for
hours worked is a clear violation of
the union contract, and the PSC has
filed a number of grievances against
CUNY’s new practice.

CUNY MUST PAY

“CUNY’s position is simply non-
sensical,” said PSC Director of Le-
gal Affairs Peter Zwickhahn. “Their
policy is that people working these
hours should not be paid anything
— but even CUNY would have to
cover the cost for that. Nevertheless,
the union filed another grievance
and won.”

The contract’s Article 15.2 sets
time limits for the classes taught by
adjuncts assigned while a waiver request
is pending. In certain cases where
the limits were exceeded and a waiver
was not even requested, the University
has taken the position that the
adjunct is in fact owed more,
minimum, these members must be
denied, the University has taken the
adjunct out of the classroom. The
union has filed another griev-
ance on behalf of these adjuncts, insisting
that they be paid for the balance of
the semester at the adjunct rate.

The union has filed a number of
waiver requests and in certain cases
denied them in others. “The extra at-
tention this problem has received
on the rights guaranteed under the
union’s contract to Continuing Ed-
coverage. Webpage also provides information
on the rights guaranteed under the
contract, respect these faculty
members, and pay them now.”

Another with the CUNY about the
matter.

The spotlight has started to
bring some change. City Tech Pres-
ident Russell Hotzler subsequently
instructed Vice President for Ad-
ministration and Finance Miguel
Cairo to set up regular meetings
between the department chairs
of the half-dozen departments
housed in Voorhees and contractor
representatives.

City Tech: Voorhees update

By JOHN TARLETON

City Tech’s administration has be-
gun to respond to concerns raised
by faculty, staff and students following last month’s Clari-
on the situation at Voorhees,
and noted that the college admin-
istration had flatly refused to meet
good-faith that they should not.”

When CUNY announced this pol-
icy, the PSC specifically brought this
contradiction to CUNY’s attention. When management refused to
revise the policy, a grievance
was filed. The grievance de-
mands that adjuncts who work in
excess of the contractual limits be
paid for this work for one
year, regardless of the status of the wa-
iver request.

The contract’s Article 15.2 sets part-
timer teaching load at a maxi-
mum of nine hours at one CUNY
 campus, plus one course of not more
than six hours at another. In certain
case emergency cases, the PSC has agreed
to waive these limits. Last year man-
agement’s increasing violations of
these contractual limits led to more
than 500 waiver requests per ses-
ter, and hundreds of cases where the

City Tech: Voorhees update

any further with the heat,” Cermele said. “The extra at-
tention this problem has received has had an impact.”

REPORTS

City Tech has offered to make biweekly construction reports available, but Cermele says daily reports of construction activities are needed so that faculty work-
ing in the building can adjust their

City Tech: Voorhees update

Any full-time employees who are reti-
ring under CUNY’s Early Retirement
Incentive (ERI) have deadline dates
that must be followed to be eligible
to retire under this incentive.

You must file two forms: an of-
official ERI-2010 Election form with
your college Human Resources
office, no later than 5:00 pm on
January 6, 2011, and a retirement
application with your retirement
system, no later than 5:00 pm on
January 13, 2011.

You are encouraged to bring
these forms to your college HR of-
ce and your retirement system
prior to those dates. If you change
your mind and wish to remain a
full-time employee at CUNY, you
can retrieve these documents until
January 26, 2011.

For more information about the
ERI, see www.psc-cuny.org/ERI2010.htm or contact your col-
lege HR office.
At the center of a sudden storm

By MOUSTAFA BAYOUMI
Brooklyn College

His past August, I briefly occupied a small corner of the national culture shocker lane (I felt a bit like a fish in a fishbowl. Everybody was staring at a distorted image of me, and all I could do was blink and blow bubbles. I teach at Brooklyn College, where the undergraduate writing program has for the last several years assigned a "common reading" to all incoming freshmen. This year, the program selected my book, How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America, in which I tell the stories of seven Arab American men and women, all in their 20s and living in Brooklyn, coping with a post-9/11 world.

The criteria for the common reading are that the book should preferably be set in New York City, have a significant immigration component (since many of our students are themselves immigrants or come from immigrant backgrounds), and be in the form of life stories. It should also be written by a living writer, so I was contacted and led to the campus to talk about the book with students. My book fit the bill. (Previous readings include Frank McCourt’s Angela’s Ashes and Jonathan Safran Foer’s Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close.)

Everything was fine until about a week before classes began. That’s when the chair of my department called me to tell me that the college had received a small number of complaints from alumni and an emeritus faculty member about the selection. She assured me that the college was standing by its decision, and the dean of undergraduate studies subsequently told me the same thing. But I knew that in today’s wired world, administrators worry about complaints hitting the Internet and going “viral.” And that’s exactly what happened.

When the book was published, Brooklyn College Quarterly magazine ran an op-ed on page 7, headlined “The selection of my book a ‘scandal’ and claimed that it paints “New Yorkers in particular as completely Islamophobic” (patently untrue). I received calls at home from television news shows, and Channel 11 even broadcast my picture, calling me “this guy!” in its pre-commercial teaser. I was ready to hide behind a piece of coral. Both The New York Times and The New Yorker pointed out that the controversy was almost entirely driven by off-campus conservatives, but it didn’t matter. Now I – not those manufacturing the storm – had become the controversial one. Brooklyn College was not advancing a liberal education by having students read a book about the post-9/11 life experiences of young Arab Americans, but was, rather, “pushing” an “anti-American, pro-Islam” book – at least according to rightwingnews.com.

I was getting a very personalized education about how all things Muslim are at the center of today’s culture wars. I might have found the fracas amusing were it not unutterably “sensitive.” Park51’s opponents, like Sarah Scaife Almontaser, proposed opening a dual-language school for the post-9/11 memory of September 11. But that argument isn’t based on bigotry – though it’s hard to see how they aren’t equating all Muslims with terrorists. Instead, they say it’s the project’s backers who are “insensitive” to the “anti-American, pro-Islam” book – at least according to rightwingnews.com.

TWO YEARS OF CALM

My surprise at being at the center of a controversy, even a trumped-up one, wasn’t based on naïveté. Rather, it came from the fact that the book had been out for two years already without sparking a storm. The Wall Street Journal profiled it and me in 2008. Publishers Weekly gave it a starred review (no doubt with an invisible crescent surrounding that star), CNN and NPR interviewed me about the book, and Francine Prose reviewed it favorably for O Magazine. Vermont’s Johnstone College selected it for their common reading in 2009 without any controversy that I’m aware of, and I had already spoken about it at a number of high schools and colleges, in the United States and Canada, and in front of church leaders, a Jewish congregation, and several community groups. The book even won a 2008 American Book Award (not an Anti-American Book Award).

Opposition to my book seems more symptomatic of our moment than produced by its contents. And Brooklyn College’s reading list isn’t the only one under attack. The Texas State Board of Education recently voted to limit references to Islam in their high school textbooks, even though, as the Associated Press noted, “the resolution cites world history books no longer used in Texas schools.” The Texas resolution was another attempt to create a fake controversy. It’s contrived to give the idea that Islam is on an ideological march in the US and that those who sound the alarm are America’s noble defenders. The fact that this bears little relation to reality is immaterial.

Understanding this topsy-turvy world, where assailants driven by ideology paint their targets as the ideological ones, also explains the rhetoric around Park51, the so-called “Ground Zero mosque” (not at Ground Zero and not a mosque). Here the flip comes mostly around the words “tolerance” and “sensitivity.” Park51’s opponents, like Sarah Palin, claim that their opposition to the project isn’t based on bigotry – though it’s hard to see how they aren’t equating all Muslims with terrorists. Instead, they say it’s the project’s backers who are “insensitive” to the memory of September 11. But that argument is a slight of hand. It seems that Muslim Americans can only choose between two kinds of inequality: accept second-class citizenship, or be portrayed as the intolerant ones.

We have seen this kind of shadow play before. When New York City educator Debbie Almontaser proposed opening a dual-language Arabic–English public high school in New York in 2007, she was immediately attacked personally; and the very idea of teaching Arabic (prioritized, incidentally, as a “national security language” by the Department of Education) was maligned. Conservative columnist Daniel Pipes wrote that “Arabic-language instruction is inevitably laden with pan-Arabist and Islamist baggage” – thus finally explaining the legions of Islamist Arab Christians in the United States. What is going on here? As soon as Muslims such as Debbie Almontaser, Imam Faisal Abdul Rauf, or myself are on the cup of enterprising writers (or, through a school, a community center, or a common reading), we are hit with a wave of opposition that attempts to render us work invisible. Never mind that we are, by all reasonable accounts, downright moderate along the political spectrum. The trick is simply to attach the word “radical” to the word “Muslim” and, like a magician, you can make the actual person in question disappear in a cloud of suspicion.

For the United States, the term “First Muslim” will suffice. At a time when The Economist reports that 53% of Americans hold unfavorable views of Islam and Time noted that nearly one-third of Americans believe Muslims should not be permitted to run for president (too late!), I think that the opposition to our work illustrates the need for it even more profoundly. Knowledge about Arabs and Islam is woefully inadequate today. Projects like the dual-language school, Park51, and a common reading of my book can help Americans experience the Arabic language, Islam, or Arab American culture, and present it in a kind of empathy – which holds more promise than even sympathy for putting the culture wars behind us. Sympathy asks for charity; empathy produces understanding.

IDEOLOGY

Ideology, on the other hand, can blind people to the point where they won’t even admit the experiences of others. To be invisible means to be twisted beyond recognition, to have others speak for you, or simply to be not seen. Borrowing from Ralph Ellison, it is as though we Muslim and Arab Americans have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorted views. When we approach us, they see only our surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except us. Today’s culture wars are being fought on a terrain that traverses the wrong debates about liberal education, the poverty of political discourse fomented by the Web, the unrelenting vilifications of Islam and Muslims, and the zero-sum game in which the politics of the Middle East are too often played out in the United States. In the wings is the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Part of the opposition to me may stem from another book, Midnight on the Meri Merrone, that I have just edited, about the Israeli attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. (As I make clear in that book’s introduction, I’m a believer in co-existence, in favor of a negotiated settlement, and opposed to terrorism and occupation.) But criticism or acceptance of the Israeli government’s actions shouldn’t determine acceptable speech in the United States. In any case, students were not assigned that book.

Or maybe there’s another source of the animosity toward me. In June, I published a short essay in The New York Times Magazine describing my experiences as an Arab extra on the set of Sex and the City 2. It was mildly critical of the show and perhaps set some people off – after all, the show has a lot of hardcore fans.

Brooklyn book bashed by bloggers.
Why the Democrats faltered in 2010

By FRANCES FOX PIVEN
CUNY Graduate Center

A s the smoke clears from the
debacle of the 2010 midterm
election, the outline of the
politics of the next two years
is emerging. There will be no
new stimulus legislation, no matter the
continuing high level of unemployment and
the spread of part-time and insecure
jobs. State and local government will con-
tinue to buckle under the strain of rising
safety net expenditures and shrinking
revenues. The goal of labor law reform, so
that employees could join a union with-
out fear of getting fired, will seem delu-
sional, an impossible chimera. Instead,
the Republican-led committees will turn
the House of Representatives—the “Peo-
ple’s House”—into a circus of investiga-
tions of paranoid right-wing charges.

Exactly what happened to bring us to
this sorry pass after the enthusiasm of
2008? In what follows, I draw on data pre-
 sented in a report by Lorraine Minniti for
Project Vote, the national non-partisan vot-
ing rights organization.

Some of the electoral shifts of 2010 were
simply to be expected, reflections of nor-
mal tendencies in American electoral poli-
tics. The presidential election of 2008 was
remarkable for many reasons, and not least
because voter turnout surged by 9 mil-
lion over 2004, especially among groups
who are ordinarily underrepresented in
the American electorate. Obama bested
McCain by 9.5 million votes, a number just
under his majority among first-time vot-
ers (9.9 million votes). Given what we know
about voter behavior, it should have been
expected that many of these younger, poor-
er, and minority voters would not turn out
for the mid-term election which necessarily
lacked the bold structuring of alternatives
of a presidential contest.

POCKETBOOK VOTING

Given the lower intensity of the mid-term,
it is also not surprising that the Democrats
lost many of the congressional seats they
had gained in traditionally Republican ar-
eas. The movement of many of these (conservative Democrats) were defeated, and
while their absence may make the Demo-
cratic Party more coherent and forceful in
ideological and policy terms, these losses
also upended the Democratic majority in the
House.

As has been common since the New
Deal, people voted their “pocketbook.”
This means simply that the most impor-
tant issues to voters assessing the record of incumbents were not the charges and
promises of the campaigners, but the is-
sues people actually could assess: unem-
ployment levels and foreclosures in their
communities, and changes in their own
personal income. In this regard, Barack
Obama and the Democratic Party were
perhaps too optimistic. As Hendrik Hertz-
berg pointed out in the New Yorker,
needy comparisons between Obama and Franklin
Delano Roosevelt were too facile because the
timetable of recovery was different. FDR in
1932, three years into the Great Depres-
sion, when unemployment had risen to 25
percent. By contrast, Obama and the Demo-
crats’ victory occurred earlier in the cycle when
the economic crisis was creating, and
unemployment and hardship were only be-
inning to rise. In this sense, pocketbook
voting meant: that the better comparison
is between Obama and Hoover, not FDR.

However, the election of 2010 was not
simply normal. The Democratic pummel-
ing was worse than earlier trends would
have suggested. In October, writing in the
Boston Review, Harvard’s Stephen An-
solobehere predicted that the Democrats
would lose 25 to 30 House seats. They lost
60, along with six seats in the Senate. The
reason may lie in a relatively modest re-
composition of the electorate with large
state. The rise of pocketbook or economic
voting in the 21st century is in a way an
improvement over partisan preferences
shaped by habit or by ethnic, or sectional
or racial appeals, or by nationalism, for
example. If only because people are less
susceptible to propaganda on matters with
which they have actual experience such as
jobs and income. Still, pocketbook voting
falls short of the democratic ideal that vot-
ers should monitor the actions of the lead-
ers they elect, and punish or reward them
at the polls, an ideal that moved the radical
democrats of the revolutionary era even to
oppose the creation of a national govern-
ment because it would be so removed from
their surveillance. The idea of the people
holding government accountable for what
it does has long proved quixotic, but as gov-
ernment becomes more complex and bu-
reaucratic, the idea becomes more quixotic
still. Can voters really monitor the Federal
Reserve, or the GM and bank bailouts, or
the complex pathways of the stimulus or
the bulky health care legislation or the new
financial regulations?

No, they can’t, I can’t, and you can’t.
Instead we rely on politicians to exercise
surveillance over each other and offer con-
tending explanations of the issues. Which
politicians? Well, no one better than the
president himself, as FDR demonstrated in
his famed fireside chats. In this regard,
whatever you think of Obama’s policies (I
myself think that under the circumstances
he did pretty well), he failed. In the absence
of clear ideological and programmatic lead-
ership from the President, the awesome pro-
paganda that unlimited amounts of money
could buy his opponents became that much
more effective.

ELECTIONEERING

So what should we do now? What specifi-
cally should unionites like ours do? Since
the mid-twentieth century, unions have al-
ready been successful, both with the Democratic Party, contributing
money to campaigns and playing an increas-
ingly central role in “get out the vote” drives
electioneering. Unions’ support for Dem-
ocrats has escalated in recent years, as they
sought action on labor law reform and as it
became harder to find Republicans who were
not hostile to unions on general principle. But
while Democrats certainly have problems
when they we elect workers and workers than have Republi-
cans, they have never been willing to spend
political capital on the big labor issues, par-
ticularly when those politicians are the
voters who are its constituency. Movements raise issues that politicians avoid just be-
cause they are divisive, and movements can
use dramatic and disruptive tactics to force
these issues onto the electoral agenda. The
polarizing results threaten politicians who
depend on rubber-coating the opposition,
and failure to make concessions will mean a loss of future electoral support.

In other words, movements are more likely
to expand the range of what is possible when
they attack their party allies than when the
opposition party is in power.

LEADING EDGE

Fred Block of the University of California at Davis has suggested that labor demand a huge new commitment to green infra-
structure development. Some of the build-
ing blocks for such a program are already in
place, as a consequence of new construction
of wind farms, solar factories and electric
trains that the stimulus made possible. What
if unions used their treasury and their
connections to workers to organize wave up-
on wave of noisy, rowdy demonstrations
to demand such action? Workers and students
in France and Britain have set a good ex-
ample, but perhaps the key to the advantage
is to coordinate a national effort to force
those issues onto the electoral agenda. The
polarizing results threaten politicians who
depend on rubber-coating the opposition,
and failure to make concessions will mean a loss of future electoral support.

What if unions took the lead in a defiant
movement for comprehensive reform? For all
the workers who are losing their homes are
workers and union members. Why is it to
Marx and Engels, the congresswoman from
Ohio, to urge people facing foreclosure to
stay in their homes, because the banks don’t
have valid paperwork. Isn’t that a role for
union organizers?

Franklin Delano Roosevelt won the elec-
tion of 1932 because significant numbers of
working-class voters shifted to Democratic
colonnus. But after taking office in the spring
of 1933 he did little for workers or for their
great need for the right to organize. Votes
were not enough to lead the admin-
istration to antagonize business by putting
teeth into the series of unenforceable legis-
lative proclamations with which the Demo-
crats tried to appease their working-class
base. Only as the strike movement escalated
with general strikes in 1934 and 1935 did FDR agree to toughen the 1933 “National
Labor Relations Act.” And only as the strike
movement spread through the rubber,
auto and steel industries did the Supreme
Court declare the NLRA constitutional.

The main lesson to be taken from the New
Deal is that the politicians we elect need to
have movements at their back before they make the kind of career promises to work-

Labor’s power & social movements
Budget cuts chip away at CUNY

By JOHN TARLETON

CUNY campuses are feeling the sting from budget cuts – both State budget cuts enacted this summer, and midyear cuts and set-asides now underway at both State and City levels. PSC activists are organizing to stop further cuts, and to press colleges to make choices that do the least harm to faculty, staff and students.

State aid to CUNY’s senior colleges was reduced by $84.4 million in this year’s budget. As a result, CUNY reduced senior college allocations by 2.5%, and colleges have been told to put aside another 1.25% as a reserve against midyear cuts in State support. In the last two years, CUNY senior colleges have already lost $205 million in State funding.

At the community colleges, State base aid was slashed by $30 per full-time equivalent student (FTE) in this year’s budget, for a total loss of $485 per FTE in the past two years. While the PSC and allies won $21.4 million in increased operating aid from the City Council for CUNY community colleges in June – a significant achievement in this budget climate – the union is now fighting Mayor Bloomberg’s plan for a midyear reduction (see “15-Minute Activist,” above)

VARIED IMPACT

The impact of the reductions varies, depending on a college’s enrollment patterns, vendor contracts, financial reserves, etc. But PSC chapter leaders on almost every campus say they are seeing an effect, and they are asking administrators for hard information on planned cuts and revenue sources.

John Jay has been particularly hard hit. In a September 21 memo, President Jeremy Travis announced 15% cuts in non-personnel spending and in the budget for college assistants. No searches for new faculty will be carried out this year, he said, and 44 full-time administrative positions will remain vacant. “We are in a period of great fiscal constraint,” Travis wrote.

At Baruch, the English Department has been told to come up with about a quarter of a million dollars in savings, said PSC Chapter Chair Peter Hitchcock. “The dean has suggested we teach our ‘Great Works’ literature course into 15 jumbo classes of 114 students each, with no discussion sections or graders,” he said. According to the dean, Baruch could cut 25 adjuncts as the result of this consolidation.

“It’s outrageous, and we need to look for alternatives,” Hitchcock said. “You need discussion sections to teach literature. That course had 56 sections this Fall.”

“We need to reduce the total number of sections and increase section size wherever possible,” a Brooklyn College dean wrote to department chairs in mid-November. Class size minimums have been raised from 10 to 18, PSC Chapter Chair Scott Dexter told Clarion. “They are moving from small, intimate classes to bigger classes,” he said. “It’s a new discourse.”

Reports from various department chairs and other faculty point to cuts in the part-time instructional budgets and non-personnel expenses, Dexter said PSC chapters have begun organizing at their colleges to demand that the administration take decisions that do the least harm to faculty, staff and students. At BMCC, Joyce Moorman, assistant professor of music and art, learned at her October 13 department meeting that there would be cuts in funding for work-study students and college assistants on top of previous cuts to the non-personnel budget. She was told that cuts in the adjunct budget loomed as well, that 261 sections were to be eliminated college-wide, and that maximum class size would be increased by three students in several large departments.

Moorman, who is also the PSC chapter chair, sent out an e-mail that night to other union activists inquiring if they had anything similar at their departmental meetings that day. She learned that the English, social science and math departments were also discussing adjunct cutbacks.

PSC activists, department chairs and other faculty members argued strongly that eliminating sections would be a poor decision. At a subsequent labor-management meeting, Moorman and members of the local union executive committee pressed the administration for more information. They were told that the cuts were real – but that the administration was now looking at an alternative plan to increase enrollment by 1,000 students and run classes later into the night, which would require an OK from CUNY central administration.

The 261 sections were not available when student registration for Spring semester began in November, but that could change: BMCC’s plan to address the cuts will be finalized after the size of the midyear community college cuts is decided (see “15-Minute Activist,” above).

INFORMATION

At a November 9 meeting of chapter chairs, PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant emphasized the importance of union chapters’ using labor-management meetings to obtain information about budget cuts and available revenues. That’s the first step, he said, in mobilizing members to fight for their interests.

“We can’t do this without labor-management meetings,” Fabricant said. “And they need to happen fast.”

In addition to tuition and State and City funds, college administrators have access to other revenue sources that include vendor contracts for food services or campus bookstores, and funds from the CUNY Research Foundation and individual college foundations. “Right now colleges are cutting at the margins. Redirecting discretionary funds to academic instruction may help save courses and keep class sizes down,” said PSC First Vice President Steve London. “It’s extremely important that chapters be engaged in examining the budget process on their campus, because campuses have some autonomy on how they expend their funds.

For example, London said, if adjunct budgets or class size are management’s first target, “we need to look at what other resources may be available to use instead.”

PSC President Barbara Bowen says the union has a critical role to play. “Others may dictate the terms and conditions for their department or their program,” said Bowen. “It is the union’s unique role to defend the terms and conditions of all. The union is our collective voice, and that makes it stronger than any one of us alone.”

Next year

The conventional wisdom these days is that budget cuts are inevitable – but CUNY’s budget request for next year calls for increased funding from both City and State.

CUNY’s proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2012 calls for a 9% increase in State support and a 4.6% rise in City funding, and includes the creation of 275 new full-time lines. While the union and CUNY differ on some elements in the spending plan, such as its reliance on increased tuition, the PSC supports the University’s call for increased public investment in the CUNY system.

“I think it’s significant that CUNY has made this request in these economic times,” said PSC First Vice President Steve London. “New funds won’t be easy to win – but support for public higher education is a smart move that is vital to strengthening our economy.” – JT

Stop cuts to community colleges

CUNY community colleges face a serious threat of a midyear cut in City funding – but you can take action to help stop it.

The mayor has not yet announced the size of the final budget reductions, but his target number is a 5.4% budget cut or $13 million from community college ledges this year. CUNY community colleges are now going through a so-called “budget exercise” to plan for the midyear cuts. The PSC’s community college chapters have launched a petition campaign against this midyear cut, to preserve CUNY’s ability to serve its students. Sign on to the petition at psc-cuny.org, or e-mail John Gergely (jgergely@pscmail.org) for materials to circulate at your campus.