CUNY’s enrollment has soared while funding has been cut. Now, Gov. Paterson wants to slash support for CUNY by another $84.4 million for senior colleges and $285 per full-time equivalent student at community colleges. Paterson also wants the legislature to give CUNY’s Board of Trustees the power to raise tuition every year at a rate well above inflation. In late January, PSC leaders went to Albany to say this is wrong and demand rational investment in CUNY. Above, PSC President Barbara Bowen and First VP Steve London at a budget hearing. On March 9, PSC members and students will fill buses heading to the State Capitol.

PART-TIME FACULTY
Development fund supports scholarship
The PSC-CUNY Adjunct Professional Development Fund provides part-timers with grants of up to $3,000 for classes, travel to conferences, field research and more. Applications are available online.

HAITI
The earthquake & after: a professor’s story
François Pierre-Louis, a political scientist at Queens College, provides a firsthand account of his people’s experience after their world collapsed around them.

TEACHER EDUCATION
Regents come up with wrong answer
NY State will now allow institutions outside higher education – including for-profit companies – to train teachers. PSC members oppose the plan & says research does not support it.
Letter to the Editor

Academic freedom worth defending

Peter Hogan's critique of the PSC’s Academic Freedom Committee was the focus of a recent article in the Clarion. President Hogan argues that the committee is biased and unresponsive. However, his critique misses the mark. The committee’s role is to advocate for academic freedom, monitor and report on violations, and provide a solution to excessive cold or heat in buildings. The committee has made many recommendations, and the administration has implemented some of them. The committee’s work reflects the funding priorities of the administration and the University.

BY JOHN TARLETON

Bruno College professor Jean Grassman was visiting Whitehead Hall during winter break last year when she spotted a colleague interviewing a job candidate. What she saw gave her a chill.

"They were both sitting there in coats, and the window shade was blowing because the window wasn’t sealed," Grassman recalled.

At Hunter, distinguished professor of political science Rosalind Petsky suffers from chronic sinus issues and upper respiratory problems that are exacerbated during the fall term by the sweltering conditions in her seventh floor classroom in the West Building.

TINA PFEIFFER's article in the Clarion of January 2010 mentions Ms. Pfeiffer’s case when she was not able to teach in her classroom due to extreme heat. However, the committee’s work reflects the funding priorities of the administration and the University.

The union has been fighting to install some new thermostats in the West Building. "We get things done by complaining about it," said Michael Perna, a member of the Hunter PSC Executive Committee. "It takes a while, but you see results."

Still, much remains to be done. Kelly Anderson, a professor of film and media studies, said her fourth floor classroom at Hunter College was “unbearably hot” last semester. "My class was at 8:25 pm. The students could barely stay awake." Ben Chitty, PSC Health and Safety Watchdog at Queens College, said it’s important to remember that maintenance workers are rarely the ones to blame for extreme temperatures or other chronic problems in CUNY buildings.

SCEAPERS

"It’s not the maintenance people’s fault," said Chitty, who has worked to organize a coalition of the unions to advocate for better wages, better conditions, and better health and safety conditions on the QC campus. "They have the skills. They want to do a good job. They do the work they are assigned with the resources they are given. Their work reflects the funding priorities of the administration and the University as a whole." He said the lack of proper funding goes back to the 1970s and the some complaints with the editors of the Observer and the Daily News, since we simply summarized their coverage. Of the three publications, only Clarion reported Mr. Wiesenfeld’s denial. We report, you decide.
By JOHN TARLETON
Faculty and staff at Bronx Commu-
nity College have complained for years about the school’s crumbling infrastructure. Now, BCC is begin-
ing to take action after the union organized an all-day exhibit that put a spotlight on problems plagu-
ing the 116-year-old campus.
In a January 8 message to PSC Chapter Chair Nikki McDaniel, BCC labor designee Mary Rogan announced that the college would:
• install new doors for 15 bathroom stalls by the end of February.
• repair men’s bathrooms on the 7th and 8ths floors of Meister Hall.
• frame and paint and repair a damaged wall in Room 101 in Have-
meyer Hall.
• improve outdoor lighting around Sage Hall, CPH and the Hall of Fame, an open-air colonnade with bronze busts of 98 notables from early US history.
“It feels great,” said McDaniel. “I hope it’s the beginning of a new way of doing things.”

CHANGES

 Held on November 24 in the lobby of Meister Hall, the “Hall of Shame” exhibit featured six-foot-
high display boards covered front and back with photos and vivid de-
scriptions supplied by faculty and students. The event drew more than 1,000 people.
Ten days later, PSC chapter re-

presentatives met with BCC Presi-

dent Carolyn Williams and seven other campus officials to discuss health and safety issues. On De-

ceMBER 15, McDaniel, BCC Ex-

ceutive Committee member Nikos
Apostolakis and PSC President
Barbara Bowen held a follow-up
meeting at the CUNY cen-

tral office with Williams and
CUNY labor designee Pamela Silverblatt, where it was agreed BCC would begin to take action.
“For years they have been saying they didn’t have the money to do these things, but as soon as we did this action, they began to change things imme-
diately,” Apostolakis noted. “I hope people will see that the union did this and become more active in the union and make it stronger.”

ESL professor Sharon Utakis agreed that the administration’s actions represented a positive first step. She taught last semester in Room 101 in Havemeyer where one of the walls had several holes through which bugs would enter the room. She added that the move to repair the busted bathroom stalls was especially needed.
“It’s outrageous that we have had to put up with bathroom stalls without doors,” she said. “I’ll be very happy when I see they’ve taken care of that.”

DANGEROUS

ESL lecturer Nancy Gear said she has watched the idyllic 50-acre campus slowly age over 28 years at BCC. Last semester she got a black eye when she fell while walking down some dimly lit stairs in Sage Hall.
“I hope we see positive change in the physical plant,” she said. “It’s a beautiful campus.”

Many of BCC’s infrastructure problems, such as a lack of clean drinking water and poor indoor air quality, will be expensive to fix.
Union activists say they want to build on their initial success at the campus level to push Bronx elected officials to secure more funds for the college. The PSC chapter has gath-
ered about 300 petition signatures calling on local officials to fight for BCC. The union plans to press for more capital funding for the aging campus.
“BCC is in dire need of financial support for the falling apart,” McDaniel said. “We need the City to step up to the plate.”
Faulty fire alarm

Last September Colón, Chapter Secretary Craig Bernardini and union delegate Olga Steinberg were visiting the A Building at Hostos when natural science Chair Dr. Francisco Fernández called their attention to a malfunctioning fire door and alarm system panel. The problem was adjacent to a cluster of biology and chemistry labs, with prep rooms full of chemicals, on the building's fifth floor.

Fernández and Colón subsequently met with Glenda Grace, the college's executive counsel and labor designee, who accompanied them to the site to see the problem firsthand. On November 17 the new president of Hostos, Félix Matos-Rodríguez, announced that the CUNY Central Office had allocated funds for the repairs. At the end of December, the work, which is ongoing, got underway.

Worker struggles.

"I was waiting for someone to fix it and nothing happened," said Dora Villa-González, a CLT who works on the fifth floor. "Now, I'm happy to see it's happening. I feel safer." The likelihood of a fire in a given area may be small—but if there is a fire and safety devices don't function, the consequences can be tragic.

"When you achieve a concrete victory like that, it's like 'Wow! I did something,"' added Bernardini, an assistant professor of English. "It gives you energy for the broader struggles."

"The Hostos chapter's increased focus on monitoring health and safety conditions began in early 2007, when the union teamed up with representatives from the college administration to address an embarrassing rat infestation on campus. The rat problem was eventually controlled, but the PSC chapter decided to continue outreach to members to identify health and safety problems and get them solved.

"People need to listen. They will go years without complaining because they think nothing will change," said Lisanke Soto, an HEO activist who has worked at the Savoy Building with Colón. "But if you take the time to listen, they will tell you what is going wrong in their unit. They just need a friendly face to talk to." Union activists emphasize it is management's responsibility to maintain a safe workplace.

Colón, who has a restless enthusiasm for helping others, has worked at Hostos since 1983 as a lecturer in the counseling department. On a walk through the B and C Buildings in December, she was frequently stopped and greeted by colleagues and former students. "Girls, it's the chapter!" ("How good to see you!") Colón exclaimed, as she greeted each person with a peck on the cheek and a friendly squeeze on the arm. Throughout the walk, she reminded faculty and staff about the chapter's upcoming holiday party—outreach that helped the event draw more than 50 people.

Personal contact

"The best reminders are personal," Colón remarked. "People don't read e-mail. But if you take the time and personally remind them and say, 'We would really like you to join us,' they will make the effort.

"When Colón and Bernardini dropped in on the offices of Patricia Frenz-Belkin, an assistant professor of language and cognition, she told them that they would get a lift in the CUNY shuttle.

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Regents shift NY teacher prep
Away from higher education

By JESSICA SIEGEL
Brooklyn College

The New York State Board of Re-
gents has approved a plan to expand
alternative certification and open up
teacher education to “cultural instit-
tions,” unions and “other organizations.”

For the first time, it al-
lows institutions outside higher ed-
cuation to create programs to train
teachers, with the Regents directly
granting master’s degrees.

The change is one of several
initiatives by New York State Edu-
cation Commissioner David M.
Steiner, aimed in part at improv-
ing New York’s odds of getting up
on Education Commissioner David
M. Steiner, formerly dean of the
School of Education at CUNY, wrote
that education schools were
“infused with a culture of higher
education, will be a ‘bifurcated sys-
tem’: the majority of new teachers
will come from newly created and
regulated system of education
schools, while wide leeway is given
to a group already in teachers
preparation for the first time –
from a variety of non-official high-
needs subjects in high-needs
institutions.”

The result, says Steiner, “is a
highly competitive program, estab-
lishe }
On January 19, Governor David Paterson announced a budget plan that would continue cuts to CUNY funding at a time of record student enrollment. Paterson also proposed legislation that would change how tuition rates are set, allowing CUNY and SUNY to raise tuition without legislative authorization and to charge different rates at different colleges and for different programs.

One week later a team from the PSC and New York State United Teachers (NYCUT) met with Assemblywoman Helen Rose Silver, Senate Majority Leader John Sampson and other legislative leaders to ask that they reject Paterson’s plan and instead provide fair funding for CUNY. The next day PSC President Barbara Bowen testified at a joint Senate-Assembly budget hearing. Joining First Vice President Steve London, she presented a rational investment plan for CUNY.

CUT AFTER CUT

Paterson’s proposed budget for the 2010-2011 fiscal year would cut $84.4 million from CUNY senior colleges (including $20.8 million in personnel costs). State base aid to community colleges would shrink by $281 per full-time equivalent student (FTE).

These reductions would come on top of deep cuts in State aid for CUNY senior colleges in the last two years—a $68 million cut in fiscal year 2009, another $45 million in FY 2010, and $53 million in a mid-year cut during FY 2010. The reduction in base aid to community colleges also comes on the heels of a midyear cut of $130 per FTE imposed last December.

The PSC argues that these cuts are short-sighted and amount to a self-inflicted injury on New York State. “Cutting CUNY will only make the state’s economic problem worse,” said Bowen.

“If New York wants to rehob from this recession, its best hope is to provide affordable, quality public higher education,” she testified at the January 27 hearing in Albany. “New Yorkers know that the single surest route to economic security for themselves and their families is a college degree.”

As a result, Bowen noted, enrollment of degree-seeking students at CUNY is now 259,507—the highest level in CUNY’s history. The number of full-time equivalent students at the senior colleges was up 6% last year alone, but funding per FTE is falling fast. At the community colleges, the number of FTEs is up by 1% over last year, yet Paterson’s response has been to call for an 11% decrease per FTE in State base aid.

“Any balanced assessment of the executive budget has to take into account CUNY’s huge enrollment increases,” said London. “This year’s cuts and Paterson’s proposals reverse the modest increases in State aid since 2003.”

Although senior college enrollment is up 33.5% since 1996, State direct aid per FTE is now down by 37% in real dollars. Thus, one-third more students attend CUNY today than 20 years ago, but the State provides one-third less support for each.

TARGETING HIGHER ED

Despite CUNY’s economic imperatives, Bowen said, New York’s recent cuts to public higher education “have been proportionately higher than the cuts to any other sector of the State budget.” This is a trend, she said, that “places the State in the rearguard on both economic and educational policy.”

Alongside Paterson’s calls for slashing State aid for CUNY, the governor proposed some major policy changes on public university tuition. He will allow CUNY and SUNY to make large tuition increases (up to 10% next year) without requiring legislative approval. He would also allow changing different rates of tuition—not only among different colleges, but even for different programs at the same school. Differential tuition rates would not be subject to any cap.

“These changes would encourage further reductions in State aid and make CUNY even more dependent on tuition and other private funding,” said London. “In doing so, they risk the future of New York’s public higher education system.”

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Here’s how you can be part of the PSC’s budget campaign. To join local or Albany lobbying efforts, please contact Amanda Magalhaes at amagalhaes@pscmail.org.

1) Talk with legislators in your home districts, at meetings organized by your campus political action committee.

2) Join a PSC lobbying delegation in Albany on March 2-3, March 9 or March 15-16. (Two-day trips go up in the evening and lobby the next day.)

3) Respond quickly when you are asked to send ACT NOW messages to legislators via the PSC website.

4) Visit the PSC budget web page (www.psc-cuny.org/BudgetCampaign1011.htm) to stay informed.

What can you do?
Oregon voters OK progressive tax changes

By BARBARA McKENNA
Editor, AFT On Campus

In a special election on January 26, Oregon voters approved the ballot measures that will raise $727 million for vital public services.

The 5% vote was a solid endorsement of progressive taxation, in a state where right-wing anti-tax groups have often prevailed at the polls. “Even in more conservative areas, support was stronger than expected,” the Portland Oregonian reported.

The measure was a top priority for Oregon affiliates of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The turnout was unusually high for a special election, said David Rives, president of AFT-Oregon. The result reflected voter opposition to cuts in public services, said AFT VP Merlene Martin, head of the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA). “We showed the effectiveness of a broad coalition that spoke with one voice,” she said.

TOP PRIORITY

Measures 66 and 67 will raise the corporate minimum tax from $10 to $350—the first increase since 1931—and will raise the tax rate on household income above $250,000. Before the passage of these measures, Oregon ranked near the bottom of corporations doing business in Oregon paid just the $10-a-year corporate minimum income tax.

The measures came to reference after Governor Ted Kulongoski, a Democrat, enacted progressive tax changes passed by the legislature to help close a $4 billion hole in the State budget. After that happened in July 2009, opponents collected signatures to place the issues on a ballot for a special election. More than 250 organizations came together in support of the measures and formed the “Yes for Oregon” coalition, an alliance that included unions, small business groups, advocates for children and seniors, churches, neighborhood associations, and civil rights and environmental organizations. With help from the national AFT Solidarity Fund, AFT-Oregon and OSEA were able to play leading roles.

Coalition members made hundreds of thousands of phone calls and personal visits to people’s homes. Advocates pointed out that the measures affected only those most able to pay their fair share, Rives noted. The income tax increase affects just 3% of all Oregonians, while the corporate tax increase affects just 7% of all businesses. “We were able to communicate really well that people are led up with cuts to vital services,” said AFT-Oregon’s Rives. “The key point we made is that in Oregon, 90% of the State budget goes to education, health care and public safety. We just want to maintain the funding and prevent future cuts.”

Oregon voters OK progressive tax changes

Y funding

Taking the ‘public’ out of higher ed?

Adapted from PSC President Barbara Bowen’s January 27 testimony in Albany on Governor Paterson’s proposed changes in the structure of public university tuition.

We call on you to reject the governor’s recent proposal for restructuring public higher education. There is nothing either empowering or innovative about the governor’s proposed “New York State Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act.” It seems to have forgotten that higher education is a public good, not a private commodity.

The reason for spending public money on public universities is that the whole society benefits when the population is educated. People prosper, communities flourish, culture, science and medicine advance for all when the public has access to higher education. The false and cynical premise underlying the governor’s proposal is that a college education benefits only the person who earns the degree and has a purely instrumental value. While some minor elements of the proposal may make sense for CUNY, such as economies in purchasing, its central structure—replacing public money with private—amounts to turning the State’s back on CUNY and could mean the end of a tradition of access that spans three centuries.

STUDENT CASH COWS

By allowing CUNY and SUNY to set their own tuition levels, free from legislative oversight and public accountability, and by making zero commitment to match any tuition increases with additional State dollars, the governor’s proposal essentially takes the public out of public higher education. Under its provisions, CUNY and SUNY would be allowed to increase tuition every year by two-and-half times the five-year average of the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI). As an example, CUNY could raise student tuition up to 10% this year, rather than the 2% requested—and could go on raising tuition by a similar amount every year. Tuition at a public university increasing at more than double the higher education inflation rate every year? The governor calls this a “rational tuition” policy. We call it irrational. It is not difficult to predict the next step, given New York’s sorry history of underinvestment in CUNY and SUNY. Students become the cash machine, legislative control of tuition disappears, and the State cuts back even further on its support. The governor’s proposal says not one word about State investment and offers no guarantee that ever-escalating tuition would not be used to replace existing State support. This is a plan for privatizing the public universities, reducing State support and limiting access to those who can afford the constantly rising tuition. We are confident that the legislature will recognize that it is not in the public interest.

TAP REDUCTIONS

The proposal also needs to be considered in light of the proposed decreases in TAP. The Executive Budget this year decreases TAP funding by $83 million, with a large portion of the funding reductions targeted at students in community colleges. Whole categories of students are not well served by TAP now, especially older independent students without children and many working adults.

One element of the governor’s proposal deserves fuller discussion, because it may be favored by the universities themselves. The Act would authorize public universities to establish different tuition levels for different colleges and programs within colleges. For instance, tuition at one senior college could be higher than at another, or tuition for students majoring in engineering could be higher than for students majoring in English.

In addition, such “differential” tuition would not be subject even to the mild restriction placed on annual tuition increases, of conforming to two-and-half times the HEPI average. There will be few limits on CUNY if it decided, for instance, to charge $10,000 a year to students selecting a pre-med major.

Inequity

The result of such a change would not take long to emerge: poorer students would be shut out of certain majors, likely the sciences and others that are costly to offer, and steered toward less costly ones. Differential tuition would exacerbate existing, and persistent, inequalities of race, gender and class. It was to challenge those inequities that many of us entered into education in the first place and that CUNY was founded as a bold experiment in 1848. Imagine how CUNY’s founders would have felt if they could see their engine of social equality turned into an enforcing of existing inequities.

Rather than so-called “rational tuition,” what CUNY and SUNY need is rational investment. The governor has offered a “New York State Public Higher Education Empowerment and Investment Act” that fails to include a single dollar in public investment. Instead, let’s work together to rebuild the funding CUNY and SUNY need.
Immigrant students march

Motivated by a “deep desire and need for citizenship” four immigrant students set out on a 1,500 mile walk from Miami, Florida, to Washington, DC, on January 2. The students hope their walking protest will draw attention to Congress’s lack of action on legislation that would create paths to citizenship for undocumented immigrant students brought to the US as children.

Three of the four protesters do not have legal status in the US, although they have spent most of their lives in this country. Felipe Matos, 23, a graduate of Miami-Dade, has been unable to get a work as a teacher because he does not have a valid Social Security number. Three of the students risk detention before their planned May arrival in Washington, given the steady pace of immigration enforcement under the Obama administration.

MIT study: action needed for a diverse faculty

A recent study by MIT looked at a problem that plagues academia across the country: lack of racial diversity among faculty. The report concluded that the university must improve recruitment and retention of Black and Hispanic faculty to remain competitive.

Carol Wright, now a research associate with the PSC’s Project on Faculty to Remain Competitive, worked on the study. Wright said, “Understanding, documenting and monitoring this process is very important.”

The report urged MIT to examine the challenges faced by minority faculty in order to understand the reasons they leave at higher rates than their white counterparts. Expanding sources for recruitment, making mentoring more consistent and understanding the context of history and power were among its other recommendations.

Barron loses post, another CUNY stalwart steps in

On January 21, City Councilmember Charles Barron was removed as chair of the Higher Education Committee. Barron had opposed Christine Quinn for Council Speaker, but lost 48 to 1. According to the New York Post, Quinn “exacted revenge by removing him from his chairmanship.” The PSC’s January Delegate Assembly approved a resolution thanking Barron, a staunch supporter of CUNY funding, for his work on behalf of CUNY. Ylanis Rodriguez, who succeeds Barron as Higher Education Committee chair, is a former CUNY student leader who helped lead campus building takeovers in 1989 and 1991 to block tuition hikes and is also a strong CUNY advocate.

25 years of Working Theater Off-Broadway, always on target

With Broadway tickets today often costing more than $100, professional live theater seems a luxury for most of New York’s labor force. But for almost a quarter of a century, the off-Broadway Working Theater has sought to present quality plays at affordable prices for “Americans working in the industrial and service economies who may be unable to afford commercial theater prices or feel ‘that it does not resonate with their lives and experience.’”

A fully professional, nonprofit organization operating under an Actors Equity Off-Broadway contract, Working Theater has consistently drawn a racially and economically diverse audience. It accomplishes this through innovative outreach, ticket subsidies, intense collaborations with the city’s labor unions and an artistic commitment to thought-provoking stories relevant to the times we live in.

Meaningful plays

Working Theater began in 1985 when a group of actors from the same acting class banded together to produce the kinds of meaningful plays they felt were being ignored on Broadway, where shows grow more expensive every year and increasingly devoted to fantasy spectacles like Phantom of the Opera. Mark Pleasant, who has been its producing director since 1996, says while the group avoids one-sided “agitprop” sketches, its plays are political in the sense of “making audiences aware of issues that are important to working people.”

In other words, he says, “We don’t do plays about people summing up in the Hamptons.”

Due to its limited budget and commitment to paying artists in accordance with industry standards, Working Theater may not produce as often as they’d like, but much of what they have presented has been hailed for its quality. Their biggest box office success was the 2000 comedy Tabлетоп about a tyrannical television producer (played by comedian Rob Bartlett) tormenting the technicians under him. Tabлетоп will return for a special reading this season, along with other past hits like I Am A Man, about the labor strike that brought Martin Luther King Jr. to Memphis in 1968 before his assassination. Last season’s Exit Cucloos, in which Lisa Ramirez performed an account of her experiences as a professional nanny, will also return for a two-night engagement.

Adventurous writers

As the range of upcoming titles suggests, Working Theater presents plays of many different styles and genres. Working with playwrights from a variety of backgrounds, the company aims to make works accessible to all audiences without compromising their challenging content. Jason Grote, whose anti-Walmart satire Box Americana was commissioned by Working Theater in 2005, admitted that while “some of my more ‘down-to-earth’ sensibilities, and my idiosyncratic way of working, didn’t always fit in,” he admired the company for its “old school artistic sensibilities.”

Adventurous writers are grateful for the existence of a company willing to take chances on work that questions the status quo and takes the point of view of employees more than employers—a company that can bring that work to audiences for whom this resonates on a deeply personal level.

To cultivate such an audience, the company caps all tickets at $25 and offers further discounts to labor union members at the box office. Business sources say that a company can guarantee even lower prices, as do special “pay what you can” nights. Since their box office sales often account for 25% of the high expense of producing professional theater in Manhattan, the company aggressively seeks external funding from both public agencies (like the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs) and private sponsors (like Amalgamated Life) to subsidize ticket prices.

Outreach

Just as crucial to Working Theater’s success are its grassroots outreach efforts. Its Special Constituencies Initiative enables non-union and orator who escaped from slavery to become a national voice of conscience, is historical, Pleasant believes that “any play that deals with issues of race and racism is always relevant to an audience of working-class people.”

Also on the way are American Jornalero (a satire about anti-immigration minutemen, presented March 4 through March 10) and a new adaptation of Chekhov’s classic Three Sisters (updated to take place in a suburb in the Bronx). It should add up to a substantive and entertaining landmark season for one of the hardest working theater companies in town.

By GARRETT EISLER Graduate Center

Andre De Shields in his one-man show, "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory," about the life of freedom fighter Frederick Douglass. The Working Theater production runs through February 14.
Union fund boosts adjunct research

By JOHN TARLETON

Since March 2007, the PSC/CUNY Adjunct Professional Development Fund has awarded 436 grants of up to $3,000 to adjunct faculty members to help pay for activities that further their scholarship.

The grants have paid for taking classes, travel to conferences, field research and more. They are available to contingent faculty who teach six or more classroom contact hours per semester and to continuing education teachers who teach a minimum of 20 hours per week. The fund’s budget of $500,000 per year is administered by a union committee.

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY

“It makes a great deal of difference,” says Michael Seitz, a long-time adjunct in the communication skills and theatre department at John Jay who sits on the four-member committee that reviews and decides on proposals on a monthly basis. “It makes adjuncts feel a part of the academic cadre of the university and it makes it possible to do scholarly work, which is very difficult for full-time faculty who don’t earn enough money.”

Application forms can be downloaded from the PSC website (www.psc-cuny.org/AdjunctContinu ingDev.html). Seitz cautions that in order for expenses to be reimbursed, a proposal must be approved before money is spent. His other advice is simple and straightforward: “Apply! It’s a great opportunity.”

Here are stories of four of CUNY adjuncts who took advantage of that opportunity in the past year.

Erum Hadi
LEHMAN COLLEGE
Adjunct lecturer in health sciences

Erum Hadi has more than 10 years experience as a health researcher in New York City and Dutchess County and was looking for ways to connect with his past.

“I have knowledge in the subject matter,” says Hadi, who teaches a pair of night courses at Lehman College on epidemiology and health statistics. “But I had no real knowledge in how to deliver that.”

Hadi is raising a five-year-old son and relies on her earnings as an adjunct to help with bills. Thanks to money provided by the Adjunct Professional Development Fund, she was able to take a couple of graduate-level courses that enabled her to think anew about how to approach teaching.

“It helped me understand the students’ perspectives,” she says. “I can’t just stand there and be didactic. Each student is different.”

Instead of just giving lectures, Hadi now incorporates student discussions and field trips. Students discuss timely articles from Health Policy and Administration and are encouraged to present their community college research at professional meetings.

John Paul González
CCNY
Adjunct lecturer in ethnic studies

John Paul González, an Adjunct Professional Development Fund recipient, said he is using the grant to support his scholarship.

“I love it when Puerto Rican dance, music and literature are included in the course,” he says. “It provokes resistance.”

González, who has a master’s degree and was looking for ways to connect with his Puerto Rican heritage, recently received a grant from the Adjunct Professional Development Fund to study traditional and contemporary plena music in Puerto Rico.

For making the hand-held drums on which plena depends.

“It was like rediscovering Puer-

to Rico,” says González, who is planning a doctoral dissertation on Puerto Rican composer Pablo Fernández Badillo. “I learned so much I didn’t know before, and that was a great feeling.”

After his return to NYC, González was able to bring the sights and sounds of plena and related genres like bomba to his classroom.

Last semester he produced 15-minute videos that combined the sounds of plena with various interviews he had conducted during the trip. “I love it when Puerto Rican students say, ‘I didn’t realize our culture was so alive, so relevant,’” González remarks. “It makes me so happy that I’ve shared it, and people could see that the connection to our past isn’t just theory.”

Philip Beitchman
MEDGAR EVERS
Adjunct assistant professor in English

Philip Beitchman is a self-described “intellectual nomad,” a contingent academic who has been an independent scholar for the past 50 years. Last March Beitchman used support from the fund to join several hundred scholars at an international French studies colloquium in Minneapolis, where he delivered a paper on the impact of 9/11 on the thinking of the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard.

“It was my tribute to Baudrillard,” says Beitchman, 71, who has authored three books and translated a dozen more, including two of Baudrillard’s works published in the 1980s.

In the two decades leading up to 9/11, Baudrillard had foretold a world in which a thoroughly globalized system would end up at war with itself. “He lived to see his prophecy override him,” Beitchman says. After presenting his paper at the conference, Beitchman was approached by a journal editor about its possible publication. Beitchman was glad to get the offer, but declined to save the article’s first publication for a future book of essays he is planning. Beitchman said he attended about 14 conference sessions and one on post-colonial literature and politics gave him fresh insights for his next book, on naturalism and theater.

Sonia Blanco-Florentino
CCNY
Adjunct lecturer in early childhood education

Last year Sonia Blanco-Florentino saw the schools of her dreams. They were three municipal preschools in Reggio Emilia, an Italian town two hours north of Milan – and Blanco-Florentino was able to work there for a week last April, thanks to a grant from the Adjunct Professional Development Fund.

Reggio Emilia is internationally known for its progressive approach to early childhood education. In the schools where Blanco-Florentino worked, teachers focus on learning that affords children who are nine months to five years old. Classrooms are set around an open courtyard. They are full of rocks and plants and have full-length windows that allow natural light to come pouring in. Different rooms have stations set up for play with clay or blocks or legos or for drawing. Even the infants are encouraged to represent their experiences symbolically. Students also get to film each other while learning.

“It’s an amazing, amazing thing to watch,” Blanco-Florentino says. “They don’t think there is a cap, a limit to learning. It was like a shot of adrenalin, so I come back and do my work here.”

CREATIVE TEACHING

Blanco-Florentino, a 25-year veteran of the New York City Department of Education, works with a half-dozen schools helping to develop programs to better address the needs of language minority students with learning disabilities.

She also teaches two courses in the Childhood Education Department at CCNY on working with students and a summer course on creative approaches to teaching. She says she tries to incorporate the learner-centered teaching approach she saw in Reggio Emilia whenever possible.

“We don’t have a very good understanding of how to teach children creatively in light of all that we are asked to do in public education,” Blanco-Florentino says. “Hopefully, that will change some.”

Support from the fund, she stated, helped her to bring a piece of that change back to NYC.

Study, travel, field research and more

Every semester there are cases of CUNY employees receiving paychecks without the correct payroll deductions. Depending on what’s missing, the errors can cause problems in areas from pension calculations to union elections. In other cases, the Social Security number on a paycheck may be incorrect, which can cause a host of problems.

The moral of the story is, check your check! If you’re not sure what deductions are correct, a useful guide was published in Clarion last fall. (See www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm; for employees with last names of A-M, see September 2009 issue; for senior colleagues, page 9 of October 2009.) If you have a problem or question, talk to your college’s payroll or Human Resources office.
I was waiting for a 5 pm meeting with a southeast of Haiti, in Anse-à-Pitres. While coming from one of the windows. It sounded sure that everyone could get out. calling out other people's names to make the building began to rattle. It felt like the building was cracked. There was this eerie silence slowly from the streets of the city. As the earth-thing lasted less than a minute. While the phones were dead; there was no electricity. People were coming in with bro-"sion was how to get out. As we considered them sheets, pillows and water. As night more aftershocks, many people decided to carrying seemed dead already. Fearing to pass out when we gave her water and got her rest to a live. By this time throngs of people from the hotel's owner began to warn us about the shortage of food, water and fuel. We learned that there was an alarm about an imagined tsunami. People who were camp-"sional aid to the mountainous areas. Those who had face masks over their mouths were able to breathe without it. No one was helping the people on the streets. Children, young and old, gathered in the middle of the streets, hungry, dazed, in pain and helpless. Another night was falling with no hope of a better tomorrow. As night merged their pains and we slow-motion. We watched as hundreds of people crying, carrying whatever they could, walked up the streets to the mountains. About 3 am, we learned that it had been a false alarm. Thursday: At night we felt aftershocks every hour. Some stronger than others but, every af-"sister to receive more news about people's where- at 5 am. I heard a noise from one of the windows. It sounded like a huge airplane taking off, like a Boe-"ning and yelling. On the Richter scale. More panic; more cry-"happening. As we considered what was going on. We learned that there was an alarm about an imagined tsunami. People who were camp-"dead already. Fearing to pass out when we gave her water and got her rest to a live. By this time throngs of people from the hotel's owner began to warn us about the shortage of food, water and fuel. We learned that there was an alarm about an imagined tsunami. People who were camp-"sional aid to the mountainous areas. Those who had face masks over their mouths were able to breathe without it. No one was helping the people on the streets. Children, young and old, gathered in the middle of the streets, hungry, dazed, in pain and helpless. Another night was falling with no hope of a better tomorrow. As night merged their pains and we slow-motion. We watched as hundreds of people crying, carrying whatever they could, walked up the streets to the mountains. About 3 am, we learned that it had been a false alarm.
Money & media

If you give money for Haiti's reconstruction, please consider donating to groups that work directly with Haitian grassroots organizations, which are often desperate for resources. Consider donations to Yéle Haiti (yele.org), Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (haitiwomen.wordpress.com), send checks to IFCO/Haiti Relief, 418 W. 145th St., NY, NY 10031, or CENAREF, the National Center for Research and Training (donate at haityrelief.org and “for CENAREF” in the Feedback field).

In term of the press, mainstream US media is very limited. Contrasting US coverage with the foreign press can be instructive. For example, French- and Spanish-language media regularly interview Haitian government officials, while CNN seems to mainly interview CNN employees. I would encourage readers to listen to NPR, Democracy Now and other programs on WBAI or the BBC, and to look at their websites. It’s helpful to watch and read as much foreign press as possible; for example, the BBC and Le Monde have generally had good coverage.

— FPL
Fight for CUNY funding

Gov. Paterson keeps cutting
CUNY’s budget — but the PSC is lobbying in Albany and locally for full funding of CUNY’s budget requests and restoration of cuts made in the last two years. Go to the budget page on the PSC website (www.psc-cuny.org/BudgetCampaign011.html) for the latest news and to find out how to get involved.

While you’re on the website, sign the letter (www.unionvoice.org/campaigns/NoCutstoCUNY) opposing the governor’s short-sighted vision for CUNY’s — and New York’s — future.

Tell your legislators that CUNY needs a rational investment strategy — and that cutting CUNY will only make the State’s economic problem worse.

UK unions on work/life balance

By STEVE LEBERSTEIN

‘Time to give yourself a break’

At crunch times — especially in admissions, counseling, registration, financial aid and bill payment — the hours are long for the professional staff whose work makes CUNY run. Too often, employees in the Higher Education Officer (HEO) series work those extra hours without any extra compensation, in violation of the union contract or federal labor law. And it’s not just CUNY; in a recent study by the National Employment Law Project and researchers at UCLA and the University of Illinois-Chicago, 92% of the non-hourly workers in their sample had overtime pay violations.

So if you add up all those extra hours, what do you get? In Britain, where the problem is widespread, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) took a look and got a surprising answer.

UNPAID HOURS

Last year the TUC, Britain’s national labor federation, estimated that more than five million British workers regularly worked unpaid overtime, giving their employers $41 billion in free labor. If all those unpaid hours were worked at the beginning of the year, the TUC calculated that the average British worker would start earning money for him or herself on February 26. The TUC therefore proclaimed February 26, 2010, as “Work Your Proper Hours Day.”

“Work Your Proper Hours Day is one of several TUC initiatives that aim to help employees take control of their working hours, instead of being controlled by them. The federation has waged campaigns against uncompensated overtime with titles like “Get A Life,” and the TUC has observed Work Your Proper Hours Day since 2005. The website (www.workyourproperhoursday.com) provides an online quiz, an unpaid overtime calculator and a video game that raises consciousness with a dose of humor. More in-depth analysis is on the federation’s Work-Life Balance webpage (www.tuc.org.uk/work_life).

As the TUC’s figures make clear, uncompensated overtime is a form of wage theft. But there’s more to it than pounds and pence, or dollars and cents. “Britain’s long hours culture is a national disgrace,” said former TUC General Secretary John Monks. “It leads to stress, ill health and family strains. But even worse, it’s an indictment of how badly we manage work in the UK.”

A long hours culture is even more rampant in the United States. As Donald Trump notes on his “Trump University” website, “Many Americans are giving up traditional vacations...[I]n many cases, people just aren’t in the habit of getting away from their jobs.” Trump suggests that those who want to make a good impression on the boss should never go on vacation without their cell phones and laptops, so they can stay connected and ready for work at any time.

Of course, in a public university, professional staff as well as faculty often work long hours because of their commitment to students or the demands of research, while working in an underfunded institution. That’s true in the UK, too: Britain’s University and College Union (UCU) says that a study of its members found they worked about 20% more unpaid overtime than the national average.

Rob MacKenzie, a senior lecturer in industrial relations at Leeds University, called unpaid overtime “rife” at his institution. “People often work long hours because of the pressure to help students, or pressure from their bosses,” said MacKenzie.

And regardless of whether it’s caused by workplace culture, a desire to help students, or pressure from the boss, the stress of the added hours robs workers of their health and feelings of control. “Consistently working long hours is likely to adversely affect your health as well as your productivity,” said TUC consultant professor Cary Cooper of Lancaster University.

UNHEALTHY

That’s true in America as well. In a review of US studies of working hours, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found that “overtime was associated with poorer perceived general health, increased injury rates, more illness, and increased mortality.” Overtime was associated with unhealthy weight gain in two studies, increased alcohol use in two of three studies, increased smoking in one of two studies and poorer neurological test performance in one study.

Unless there is a system for tracking overtime and compensating workers for it, excessive overtime quickly becomes routine. And it tends to get worse and worse. The danger is that it becomes the norm,” MacKenzie told Clarion. “People are encouraged to accept the situation.”

A member of the non-teaching professional staff at Leeds, Candida Skinner, postgraduate operations manager in the Business School, reported that she and her co-workers generally no longer have lunch breaks as they cope with increasing student enrollment and shrinking staff. “At peak times,” she said, “we’ll be here to 10 at night. And the peaks now come in September, October, January, February and August: lots of peaks, not too many troughs.”

At CUNY, employees in the Higher Education Officer series have won a strong arbitration victory that protects their right to compensatory time after 35 hours per week. A court settlement provides that some HEO-series employees, depending on their specific title, must get overtime pay after 40 hours. (See page 7 of the September 2008 Clarion, at www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm, for details.) But it hasn’t been easy to change old habits, even when they directly violate the contract or federal law.

To get compensation for overtime, it’s important for HEO-series employees to keep a written record of their hours and get authorization, in writing, for working overtime. But Jean Weisman, chair of the PSC’s HEO Chapter, said that many HEOs hesitate to make sure they get fair treatment. “Often they are too busy to find someone to approve it,” Weisman said, “or don’t have a way to record it or aren’t aware of their rights.”

COMPENSATION

“If you work in a HEO-series title, there are many reasons why you may have to work overtime,” said PSC Contract Enforcement Coordinator Albert Mufioz. “But you deserve to be compensated for it — and your family deserves that, too.” If you face a problem getting fair treatment on overtime, said Mufioz, contact him at amunoz@pscmail.org, or by phone at (212) 354-1252.

For CUNY employees who want to start their own observance of Work Your Proper Hours Day on February 26, here’s a suggestion from the TUC: “Why not take some time to reflect on how well (or badly) you’re balancing your life? This is one day in the year to make the most of your own time. Take a proper lunch break and leave work on time to enjoy your Friday evening. You deserve it!” And when you hit one of those peak work times, if you’re denied comp time or overtime pay for your extra hours, call a PSC grievance counselor right away.

Studies show working long hours can harm your health.

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