CRUMBLING CONDITIONS

BRONX CC DEMANDS ACTION

"It becomes normal," a student at Bronx Community College told Clarion. "You see it every day and it becomes normal and you think that it's never going to change." Health and safety problems at BCC's aging campus are often severe -- and the PSC chapter has vowed that a change is going to come. The union organized a one-day exhibit that drew more than 1,000 people, putting a spotlight on problems like leaky ceilings, rodent infestations, inadequate supplies of safe drinking water, and students shivering in cold classrooms. Above, Fran Caruso, a senior CLT, with a beaker of cloudy and undrinkable tap water from Meister Hall.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM
Hunter to rewrite disputed policy
A new policy at Hunter would have required approval before talking with elected officials “as a scholar, teacher, mentor or citizen of Hunter College.”

PAGE 5

RESEARCH
Role of PSC-CUNY awards
The PSC-CUNY Research Awards will soon begin their fifth decade. Faculty members talked with Clarion about the difference this support has made to their careers.

PAGE 10

CALI CRISIS
Resistance to UC cutbacks
Governor Schwarzenegger and the state legislature cut University of California funding by $800 million this year. It’s a crisis that’s been 30 years in the making.

PAGES 6-7

UNION VICTORY
No Tier V for CUNY employees
Backed by thousands of messages from PSC members, the union protected the pension benefits for future members of CUNY’s retirement systems.

PAGE 3
Beryl Weinberg, 1922–2009

By PETER RIGNESS

Beryl Weinberg, a founding staff member of the PSC, died November 29 at age 87. Weinberg was the original staff member of the Legislative Conference (LC), which merged with the United Federation of College Teachers to form the PSC in 1972, and played a central role in the life and history of the union.

Born in 1922 in Philadelphia, she attended the Walden School. Weinberg graduated from Wellesley in 1943 and went on to earn a MA in history at Columbia. She worked for years as a researcher at the Ford Foundation.

Weinberg was hired by LC President Belle Zeller as the group’s first—and for a time only—staff member, after the LC was formally recognized by CUNY in 1969. “I did everything,” Weinberg told friends. “Whatever they needed me to do, I did.” Following the newsletter to fielding phone calls, it was all part of her job. Later she took on a new, more clearly defined position as the LC’s expert on pension benefits, a role she continued as a staff member of the PSC.

“PERFECT MATCH”

“Beryl surpassed every expectation of success with her knowledge and personal skills,” former PSC President Irwin Polishock told Clarion. “She was a perfect match for our members’ needs for reliable and available advice.”

The memorial notice for Weinberg in The New York Times described her as a “champion of struggles for unions, peace and human rights,” and her former coworkers at the PSC concur. “Her roots in social justice and her former coworkers at the PSC and her former students at the PSC legislation committee, given that I already subsisted on funds diverted from mines.

The well-trained professional politely verified my address and e-mail address. Maybe in the future I could once again see fit to kick into the fund drive. I told him that I also hope for the arrival of such a day.

A natural reaction

I’m sure no malice was in the recent PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund bulletin, which defined dependent children as either “natural” or adopted children. Nonetheless, I am sure we, as educators would all agree that words carry cultural meanings to which we must pay careful attention. There is nothing unnatural about adopted children themselves, or how they came into the world, or how they came into their families. On the other hand, the term “natural child” implies there is something inherently natural, or more natural, about how birth children came to be part of their families, which we know, given all kinds of available medical intervention, is often far from the case.

Taking this one step further, the term “natural child” also implies that there is something inherently natural, or more natural, about procreation, and by extension heterosexual, yet overwhelming research shows that all sexualities are socially and culturally constructed.

Adoption and lesbian/gay relationships are both found among many animals other than humans, and again, far as back as anyone knows. But the human race as a whole has moved so far from living in harmony with the natural world, and indeed has perpetrated so many crimes against it, that claims to “natural” status seem suspect.

Adjunct “entitlement”?

Today, a friend with tenure at CUNY said he was puzzled about why adjuncts are so upset when they are not re-hired. “It’s almost as if they have a sense of entitlement about their jobs,” he said. I was once again surprised by the lack of understanding of tenured faculty. Since I had to explain this to my friend, a fine human being, I thought others might be similarly puzzled. It has something to do with dignity.

An adjunct instructor does not earn a living wage. Given that, you want to be appreciated in the way, like for instance being asked to teach again. You cling to a shred of dignity in the idea that perhaps you are thought about, or even wanted, although you can’t pay your rent.

Adjuncts who have been repeatedly asked to return to teach at CUNY have shown we are good at what we do. Isn’t there some way we can acknowledge this service in our contract? Could we make a start?

I also told my friend that when I was young, I admired the 1960s generation for what they did for social justice. Now, I am embarrassed about how poorly they stand up for their own ranks.

Philanthropy—voluntary & involuntary

Reflection on the election

Now that the dispiritingly low turnout November election is over and little if anything has changed, it might be a good moment for the PSC to reconsider its process for endorsing local candidates. I’m thinking in particular of Lynne Serpe’s insurgent campaign as a Green against PSC-endorsed Mary Val-one (Democrat) for City Council in District 22 (Queens).

Lynne vector for (and continues to be in) the party’s transparent elections, more efficient and greener transit, affordable housing, marriage equality, and green jobs. She drew 1,323 votes (unofficially), or just under 24%—the highest for any Green Party Candidate in NYC. Mary Lynne was also the first third-party candidate to max out the Matching Funds Program. And yet, this spirited, progressive campaign fell completely off the PSC’s radar.

Might it be time for the PSC to consider endorsing third-party candidates with real progressive agendas? We pride ourselves on being a third-party candidate to max out the Matching Funds Program. And yet, this spirited, progressive campaign fell completely off the PSC’s radar.

Might it be time for the PSC to consider endorsing third-party candidates with real progressive agendas? We pride ourselves on being a progressive, community activist candidates in the recent New York City Democratic Party primaries. (See www.psc-loc.org and tigurl.com/PSCcandidates.) Several of those candidates ran with the endorsement of a “third party,” the Working Families Party, and appeared on both this “third party” line and the Democratic line in the general election and won. We look forward to working with a whole new group of progressive City Council members over the next four years.

The PSC has an open and transparent endorsement process that relies on the participation of PSC members. This is especially true for endorsements of non-incumbent candidates. Endorsements in local elections are recommend- ed to the Executive Council by members of the PSC Legislation Committee.

Approximately 30 Legislation Committee members labored for two days last summer and considered endorsements in 51 City Council races and other city-wide and borough races. The committee would have welcomed your participation and knowledge of candidates in the 22nd City Council District. As a member of the Legis- lation Committee and participant in its process, the committee would have taken seriously your advic- e for Lynne Serpe’s endorsement.

I encourage you to join the PSC’s Legislation Committee, and take part in recommending and imple- menting the union’s ongoing legis- lative and political program.

Voluntary & involuntary

PSC First Vice President Steve London responds. The PSC did endorse a number of non-incumbent, progressive, community activist candidates in the recent New York City Democratic Party primaries. (See www.psc-loc.org and tigurl.com/PSCcandidates.) Several of those candidates ran with the endorsement of a “third party,” the Working Families Party, and appeared on both this “third party” line and the Democratic line in the general election and won. We look forward to working with a whole new group of progressive City Council members over the next four years.

The PSC has an open and transparent endorsement process that relies on the participation of PSC members. This is especially true for endorsements of non-incumbent candidates. Endorsements in local elections are recommend- ed to the Executive Council by members of the PSC Legislation Committee.

Approximately 30 Legislation Committee members labored for two days last summer and considered endorsements in 51 City Council races and other city-wide and borough races. The committee would have welcomed your participation and knowledge of candidates in the 22nd City Council District. As a member of the Legis- lation Committee and participant in its process, the committee would have taken seriously your advic- e for Lynne Serpe’s endorsement.

I encourage you to join the PSC’s Legislation Committee, and take part in recommending and imple- menting the union’s ongoing legis- lative and political program.

Arsenal for democracy

The Kingsbridge Armory Redevelopment Alliance (KARA) led a community campaign against the Bloomberg administra- tion’s redevelopment plan, which failed to include a binding Community Benefits Agreement that would require employ- ers to pay a living wage, hire from the community, and respect the right of workers to join a union. The New York City Council struck down Bloomberg’s plan with a vote of 45 to 1.

Letters to the editor

Write to: Clarion/PSC, 61 Broadway, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10006.

E-mail: phogneSS@PSCmail.org. Fax: (212) 382-7905.
Albany imposes some CUNY cuts

Union campaign blunts Gov’s budget axe

Many of Governor Paterson’s proposed midyear budget reductions to CUNY were defeated in early December, but significant cuts were passed by both houses of the legislature and signed by Paterson. Meanwhile Mayor Bloomberg is pressing for a large midyear cut in City support for the community colleges, and the fight over next year’s State budget is not far away.

The midyear cuts approved in Albany imposed a $24 million general fund reduction on CUNY’s senior colleges, and swept $30 million from CUNY’s stabilization reserve fund. Community college base aid was reduced by $10 per full-time equivalent student, which means a $4.4 million reduction for CUNY community colleges. An additional $901,000 reduction in community college rental aid was also approved.

CUMULATIVE

“No cut to CUNY is acceptable,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “For the last 20 years, CUNY has suffered the death-by-a-thousand-cuts. Repeated small blows to the University’s budget have the same effect as a single crushing blow of the kind suffered by the California system. Without PSC pressure, the midyear assault on CUNY’s budget would have been much worse, but the fact remains that the legislature voted yes to cut CUNY again.”

Grassroots lobbying by PSC members and leaders, with support from New York State United Teachers, beat back the far more drastic cuts that the governor had proposed. Paterson had called for a reduction of $53 million in CUNY senior college general fund aid, $10 million in cuts to CUNY’s community colleges and $26.2 million in cuts to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). The proposed TAP cuts were completely restored, the CUNY community college cuts were halved, and the general fund cut to CUNY senior colleges was limited to $24 million.

The CUNY cuts were part of a larger package of midyear reductions, which though severe were less than the amount that Paterson had demanded. In mid-December, the governor unilaterally withheld local aid State spending on K-12 and other areas, a move that the State Senate was expected to challenge in court. Additional reductions in CUNY funding have not been an issue in this dispute.

Based on initial communications with CUNY management, the PSC does not expect to see any layoffs or cancellation of searches in the wake of these midyear budget reductions. After decades of underfunding and under the pressures of enrollment increases, this will further strain a university that already operates on a shoestring. But while the cuts will hurt, they should not have immediate personnel consequences.

In the senior colleges, CUNY plans to absorb the midyear budget reductions in two ways: 1) the $29 million owed from CUNY reserves will come from the University’s stabilization fund, which includes surplus funds from the last fiscal year. The University also sequestered general fund dollars in this year’s senior college budgets to deal with midyear shortfalls. With these funds and additional savings from the energy budget and other non-personnel areas, this deficit should be handled without touching personnel-dedicated dollars.

While the union has been getting reports of reductions in the Spring semester adjunct budgets at some colleges, at this time there is no indication of a directive from 80th Street requiring reductions in the budgets for adjunct faculty. It appears that any such reductions are local management decisions and not directly related to the midyear budget reductions. The senior colleges ended the 2009 fiscal year with a cumulative $2.6 million dollar surplus in their reserves—an amount in addition to the University’s stabilization reserves. Where Spring adjunct budgets are being reduced, a review of the college reserves may be called for.

State aid cuts to the community colleges should be manageable, as well, without layoffs or other personnel-related actions. But Mayor Bloomberg has called for a large cut in City community college support—$9.5 million—so the impact of midyear cuts on these colleges is not yet clear.

PSC-CUNY First Vice President Steve London (right) and Phil Smith, president of UIW, the SUNY faculty union, testifying in Albany in October against Governor Paterson’s midyear cuts in State funding for higher education.

Now mayor wants $9.5 million cut from CUNY CCs.

PSC action wins Tier V victory in Albany

Pension threats still loom

On December 2, the PSC beat the odds: CUNY faculty and staff were not included in a new, lower pension tier. Bowen emphasized.

“We also showed that PSC members, along with other municipal union members, have already contributed $200 million toward deficit reduction as part of the Municipal Labor Committee agreement on health benefits with the City of New York,” Bowen emphasized.

The establishment of Tier V was sold as a necessary measure for coping with the fiscal crisis created by the deepest economic downturn since the Great Depression, and the resulting loss of tax revenue. But that premise did not withstand close scrutiny. “A lower pension tier will in fact do very little to address New York State’s immediate deficit problem,” said the PSC’s Bowen. “As it achieves no real savings for ten years.”

For TRS participants, another major change would have been the time required for “vesting”—that is, how long it takes to qualify for pension benefits. Under Tier IV, vesting happens after five years (or the equivalent of five years’ full-time service).

Under Tier V, ten years are required. “This is a change that would have been especially disadvantageous to CUNY’s thousands of part-time faculty,” Bowen noted.

The other major feature of the new Tier VI is an increase in the minimum age for retirement with full benefits, which was raised from 55 to 62.

Somewhat different versions of Tier V are to be established for K-12 teachers, with different rules for teachers in NYC and those upset. For UFT members, larger contributions to a new Tier V would be required, but the ability to retire after age 55 without penalty was retained. For K-12 teachers outside NYC, that age will now be 57 (see www.nysut.org for info).
RF-CUNY workers win new contract

By JOHN TARLETON

After a year of battling for a fair contract, workers at the CUNY Research Foundation Center Office (RF) reached a settlement on December 8, less than an hour before their strike deadline.

The two-year agreement followed an intensive last round of bargaining after the strike deadline was announced.

Faced with the threat of a walkout, the RF agreed to delay an increase in the employees’ share of the health care premium, and increased the salary offer by 3.25%, adding a fourth year to the contract and an additional one-time cash payout of $500. The settlement is subject to ratification by the members and approval by the RF board.

**CREDIBLE THREAT**

“After more than a year of bargaining, with progress that was halting and incremental, what finally made management settle was the strike authorization vote and setting a strike deadline,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “The accelerated movement in the final phase of these negotiations shows what a powerful weapon a credible strike threat is.”

“We got a good contract. It was gratifying to see the members all rally to the defense of their Strike deadline,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “The accelerated movement in the final phase of these negotiations shows what a powerful weapon a credible strike threat is.”

“After more than a year of bargaining, with progress that was halting and incremental, what finally made management settle was the strike authorization vote and setting a strike deadline,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “The accelerated movement in the final phase of these negotiations shows what a powerful weapon a credible strike threat is.”

“We got a good contract. It was gratifying to see the members all rally to the defense of their strike deadline,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “The accelerated movement in the final phase of these negotiations shows what a powerful weapon a credible strike threat is.”

**CHAPTER CHAIR TONY DIXON**

Chapter Chair Tony Dixon described how members’ involvement grew, from wearing a small pin to a large pin to a T-shirt, then passing out leaflets and holding lunchtime rallies.

Faced with continued intraservice  
gance from management, which employed an expensive anti-union law firm to lead the negotiations, RF employees stepped up their ef- 
forts on September 14 with a one- 
hour walkout, and later marched on the office of RF President Richard Rothbard – whose previous 44% pay raise was a sore point with the workers. On September 24, by a 91% vote, RF workers autho- 
rized their bargaining team to call a strike if necessary. “The RF is officially separate from CUNY, and its status as a private nonprofit means that its employees are not covered by the strike ban in New York’s public sector labor law.”

“We didn’t just have a one-hour walkout and then a strike vote,” Dixon emphasized. “That was a result of all the work we had done before.” Meanwhile PSC members employed by CUNY called management to demand a settlement, and signed up to join the picket line if a strike occurred.

Sievers said the outcry from a number of principal investigators over the RF spending hundreds of thousands of dollars of their grant money on the union-busting law firm Nixon Peabody was especially important. “I’m overwhelmed by all the unity and solidarity we received,” Sievers said. “When we saw how the people in the field we work with felt, it made it all feel worthwhile.”

Chief negotiator Naomi Zauderer said, “It was a privilege to work with a bargaining team that dem- onstrated such dedication and for- titude. The members’ faith in them was well-placed.”

The union and management appeared to be on the verge of reach- ing an agreement at the end of November, but negotiations stalled when management put an offer on the table that would have increased salaries less than the pro- posed increase in health insurance contributions for all types of family coverage. The union threatened to file an unfair labor practice charge while the CUNY-RF workers set a strike deadline. “We had to try to bend over backward and management wasn’t giv- ing anything,” Sievers said.

“Our last resort was to go on the picket line.” In response, management changed course and the gap between the two sides was closed.

Valerie Nelson, an input operator in the Procurement and Payable Department, said the RF workers’ greatest gain was in their contract. “We were in a bind and became strong,” she said and cited the limiting the increase in health care premiums as one of the union’s main gains to show some others, she would have liked to see a larger pay raise. “The cost of everything is going up,” she said. “This is a very expensive contract.”

Sievers was already thinking ahead three years. “My co-workers were more involved than before and it gave them a sense of empow- erment,” she said. “That will carry through to the next negotiations.”

April 2002: Barron leads march for funding for BMCC recovery from 9/11.

When a reporter asked whether his own “spontaneous outburst” had been civil, he snapped. “Don’t get spontaneous with me!”

Barron also spoke with reporters after the event. “I’ve been struggling to make this happen, along with others, for eight years, even with resistance from the mayor, with re- sistance from the SHARE fund, even with the insurance company,” he said. “Don’t make me look like the bad person be- cause I don’t sit there like a little boy and let them get away with it.”

When a reporter asked whether his own “spontaneous outburst” had been civil, he snapped. “Don’t get spontaneous with me!”

Barron also spoke with reporters after the event. “I’ve been struggling to make this happen, along with others, for eight years, even with resistance from the mayor, with re- sistance from the SHARE fund, even with the insurance company,” he said. “Don’t make me look like the bad person be- cause I don’t sit there like a little boy and let them get away with it.”

**PRESS COMMENT**

The Daily News, New York Ob- server, and other publications noted that part of the background for this confrontation was the confirmation hearing of1Wiesenfeld for a second term as an Appoint- ment as a trustee in 1999. Williams- burg-accurstic Jew Abraham testified that Wiesenfeld had referred to black people as “savages” and Ha- side Jews as “thieves.” Wiesenfeld did not deny the charge at the time, saying only that Abraham was mo- tivated by a personal feud. (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)

When asked whether he was motivated by a personal feud, (He did di- rectly refer to the accusation eight years later, in a letter to Clarion.)
permission to speak with politicians?

PSC vs. Hunter policy

By John Talbot

Following intense criticism from faculty members and the PSC, Hunter College has decided to re-draft a policy that could have greatly expanded the administration's control over employee contact with public officials.

Announced in mid-November, the new policy would have required all faculty and staff to receive prior approval before talking with public officials in their capacities as “a scholar, teacher, mentor, or citizen of Hunter College.”

Hunter Professor of Anthropology Gregory Johnson spotted the sweeping language when the document came through his e-mail box on the morning of November 19. He immediately contacted the editor of the PSC chapter, which was meeting later that day.

The text of the new policy goes beyond anything they have contemplated before, said Johnson, who called the measure “unacceptable.”

Provost’s response

The chapter unanimously approved a resolution denouncing the new policy as an “assault on the academic freedom and basic democratic rights of the Hunter community.” Union-wide delegates also expressed outrage at the PSC Delegate Assembly two days later.

Faced with mounting criticism, the Hunter administration announced in December that it would revise the policy. Provost Vita Rabinowitz promised to work in consultation with the Hunter College Senate Standing Committee on Academic Freedom, and also invited PSC Chapter Chair Tami Gold to offer feedback and suggestions for changes to the policy.

The fact that they pulled it back is because of the union chapter at Hunter, said Gold. “We were very diligent. We didn’t wait one minute.”

“Due to Greg Johnson, the chapter was pretty much ahead of the curve in its response,” said Frank Kirkland, chair of the philosophy department. “Until then,” he said, “no one had picked up on it.”

Gold and other union members said the policy would have interfered with faculty members’ ability to conduct research, or speak freely about the implications of their academic work for public policy. More generally, they said the policy represented an overbearing “Big Brother” approach to monitoring the activities of faculty and staff.

The policy would have required approval for discussions with public officials about student internships, or invitations to visit Hunter and speak to a class. “There’s a fundamental issue of academic freedom for scholars that could be violated by a policy like that,” said Tom Angotti, professor of urban affairs and planning.

“I engage with elected officials and with City officials all the time,” added Angotti, who studies development policy decisions. “It’s hard for me to see how a policy like that could ever be practical.”

Angotti stressed that faculty members “need to be approached in a spirit of genuine interest, not one of being given orders.”

As written, the policy’s reach would have extended even beyond New York City. Jack Hammonds, a professor in Hunter’s sociology department, routinely talks with public officials and agencies in Brazil and Bolivia while conducting field research. Hammonds said it would be impossibly burdensome to have to secure approval before engaging in each of those conversations. “Your opportunities come up. You can’t wait to take advantage of them,” he explained.

In a December 11 e-mail to Clarion, Rabinowitz said that the “external policy” statement was intended to coordinate activities of faculty members seeking funding for their work or opportunities for their students from public officials and public agencies. She said it was meant to be a continuation of a 2007 policy promulgated by Hunter that covered solicitation of grants and gifts from private individuals, corporations and foundations.

The policy’s scope, however, went far beyond requests for financial support. It also explicitly applied to participation of public officials in “student opportunities, research, academic initiatives and special events,” and to all “meetings and conversations with public officials and agencies in your capacity as a scholar, teacher, mentor or citizen of Hunter College.”

There were few specifics about what criteria might be used for denying permission for such conversations – but the policy did spell out that public officials need to be “presented in ways that represent the College...to the best advantage.”

This incident speaks to the importance of academic freedom, and public officials need to be “presented in ways that represent the College...to the best advantage.”

A 2006 survey at Hunter, with responses from one-third of the school’s full-time faculty, found that 62% were concerned that “controversial institutional issues” could spark retaliation by the college administration.

“Someone with a full understanding of what we do at a research university would never write a policy this way in the first place,” Gold told Clarion. “It should never have seen the light of day.”

Rabinowitz acknowledged that the policy needed “clarifications and improvements,” and stated that “we do not intend this policy to interfere in any way with faculty scholarship or teaching.” She promised to release a new policy by the beginning of the Spring semester.

“We really need to hear from the provost on this,” said William Sa kas, chair of the Hunter Senate’s academic freedom committee. “At this point and time, it’s premature to have a strong feeling one way or the other,” he told Clarion. Hunter’s 2007 policy on contact with private donors had not sparked any complaints, Sakas noted. For the new policy, he also expressed concern to see if this impedes faculty research, classroom teaching, or curricular development.

Pleased

Gold said she was “pleased that the provost heard the concerns of the faculty and the PSC,” and looks forward to seeing the revised policy.

“This incident speaks to the importance of an active and engaged faculty,” she told Clarion. “It became a public issue because Professor Johnson spotted the problem and the union chapter didn’t wait one minute. This illustrates the necessity for vigilance by union members, and a strong PSC chapter.”

By Peter Higness

On November 23, CUNY’s chancellor, vice chancellors and college presidents were awarded raises by a vote of the Board of Trustees.

The largest raise for a CUNY college president went to Hunter’s Jennifer Raab, whose 8% raise in a vote of the Board of Trustees.

The highest paid vice chancellor is at www.psc-cuny.org/ExecRaises09.htm.

Trustees give pay hikes to CUNY bigs

Top execs get stockings stuffed

On November 23, CUNY’s chancellor, vice chancellors and college presidents were awarded raises by a vote of the Board of Trustees.

The largest raise for a CUNY college president went to Hunter’s Jennifer Raab, whose 8% raise in the last academic year.

The one vice chancellor who did not appear in the schedule of raises approved by the trustees was Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies, gold Small. Small's salary is paid by the CUNY Research Foundation (RF), of which Hunter College is a member.

Rutgers President Richard McCormick was awarded a $100,000 performance bonus in the last academic year.

The Trustees’ resolution on the chancellor’s increase said it was “richly deserved” and “necessary for CUNY to remain competitive and on its upward trajectory.” It compared the chancellor’s salary to top executives at several other public university systems, including the University of California, the University of Texas, Ohio State and Rutgers, who are paid more.

Shared sacrifice

The Trustees did not cite comparisons to the heads of the University of Washington, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota – all of whom have turned down or returned raises or bonuses in the last academic year.

When the Board met, Richard McCormick was awarded a $100,000 performance bonus in the last academic year.

“Rutgers is not a rich kids’ school,” Board Chair Merrick Paul said at the time. “A great many need financial aid.”

A complete list of raises for CUNY’s top executives is at www.psc-cuny.org/ExecRaises09.htm.

Goldstein’s salary jumps from $450,000 to $490,000

Top execs get stockings stuffed

On November 23, CUNY’s chancellor, vice chancellors and college presidents were awarded raises by a vote of the Board of Trustees.

The largest raise for a CUNY college president went to Hunter’s Jennifer Raab, whose 8% raise in the last academic year.

The one vice chancellor who did not appear in the schedule of raises approved by the trustees was Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies, gold Small. Small's salary is paid by the CUNY Research Foundation (RF), of which Hunter College is a member.

Rutgers President Richard McCormick was awarded a $100,000 performance bonus in the last academic year.

The Trustees’ resolution on the chancellor’s increase said it was “richly deserved” and “necessary for CUNY to remain competitive and on its upward trajectory.” It compared the chancellor’s salary to top executives at several other public university systems, including the University of California, the University of Texas, Ohio State and Rutgers, who are paid more.

Shared sacrifice

The Trustees did not cite comparisons to the heads of the University of Washington, the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota – all of whom have turned down or returned raises or bonuses in the last academic year.

When the Board met, Richard McCormick was awarded a $100,000 performance bonus in the last academic year.

“Rutgers is not a rich kids’ school,” Board Chair Merrick Paul said at the time. “A great many need financial aid.”

A complete list of raises for CUNY’s top executives is at www.psc-cuny.org/ExecRaises09.htm.
In November, mass protests of deep budget cuts, tuition hikes and layoffs in the University of California system drew national headlines. Student building occupations combined with a brief strike by campus unions to produce the most widespread and dramatic protests at UC in decades.

Bob Samuels, president of the statewide UC unit of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), which represents librarians and contingent faculty, described what happened at UCLA after the UC Board of Regents met there to approve a 32% increase in student fees, bringing the total to more than $10,000 per year.

“Students surrounded the building and locked arms, refusing to let the Regents leave the building. A tense standoff lasted for several hours, and hundreds of students and workers joined the human chain... When they finally brought [UC Chancellor Mark] Yudof out, they had to taper student protests in order to clear a way. What message did this convey? By this stage you have to use weapons on your own students?”

The UCLA protest was not even the largest that day. UC Berkeley activists built a rally of several thousand alongside union picket lines, and even traditionally quieter campuses like Davis and San Diego saw building occupations and arrests.

The November actions signaled the latest spike of campus organizing that began last summer in response to California’s state budget crisis, brought on by 30 years of anti-tax policies aimed at shrinking the public sector.

ACCESS DENIED

At one time, California could brag about the high quality and low cost of its public higher education. In 1960, when I enrolled in UCLA in 1970, I paid $49.50 per quarter in student fees. California’s legislators and voters understood such access to higher education required funding, and set up relatively progressive tax codes to underwrite post-secondary institutions as well as a world-class system of K-12 education. In the 1960s California consistently ranked among the top five states in per-pupil funding.

How times have changed. “California’s public universities and community colleges have half as much to spend today as when they did in 1990 in real dollars,” wrote CSU Trustee Jeff Bleich in a recent Los Angeles Times op-ed. “In the 1960s, 17% of the state budget went to higher education and 3% went to prisons. Today, only 9% goes to universities and 10% goes to prisons.”

By 2007, per-pupil funding in K-12 had sunk to 47th in the nation — and that was before the latest savage cuts.

This year Governor Schwarzenegger and the dysfunctional Legislature slashed CSU funding by $500 million, UC by $800 million, and the community colleges by $750 million.

Faculty and staff layoffs and furloughs, and program cuts, mean that students will wait in vain for required classes. The CSU system has closed its doors to new enrollment this Spring — and thousands of students have been priced out by enormous fee increases in all three systems.

How did this happen? California is the only state in the nation that requires a two-thirds supermajority legislative vote to pass both a state budget and any new tax. The state budget’s 2/3 rule has existed since the 1930s, but only became a serious problem as the hard right caused by the 2/3 rules and threw up their hands. Their plan, such as it is, to cut now and hope that a return to good economic times will increase state revenues later.

A different perspective has been offered by college and university students, faculty and staff, who launched determined coalition building and direct actions. In sev-

Privatepization is the issue

Saving public higher education

By GEORGE LAKOFF

Distinguished Professor of Linguistics

UC Berkeley

California’s Master Plan for its colleges and universities speaks of “state-supported higher education.” There is a good reason.

Government has two moral missions: protection and empowerment for all its citizens. Protection goes beyond police and law enforcement to protections for consumers, workers, the environment, investors, retirees, and victims of disease, injury, and natural disasters. Empowerment includes public roads and bridges, transportation and adequate systems for communication, energy, and water; functioning banking and insurance systems; and of course, education.

No one makes a living in this state without protection and empowerment by the government. Public schools are more out of protection and empowerment by the state have a moral obligation to pay more to sustain them.

It appears that the top 1% of individual taxpayers pay about 45% of the state’s income taxes, and that the same top 1% own about 30% of the assets in the state. Have these folks amassed wealth by working that many more hours than the average worker? No. They have amassed wealth because the companies they own or invest in are empowered by having state-subsidized water, state-built highways and public buildings, a state-protected environment, and the benefits of state-educated employees and state supported university research.

MORAL ENGINE

The protection and empowerment that have come from our universities is staggering. There are medical research, medical research, university hospitals and clinics; the computer industry and its spin-offs in media, film and the arts; environmental science that has led to the maintenance and improvement of our environment; the wine industry coming out of UC Davis; tens of thousands of people trained in business, law, and economics; our public health system; and on and on. The university is lot more than an economic engine: it is a quality of life engine. And when it is truly pub-

By FRED GLASS

Communications Director

California Federation of Teachers

largest protests since last major labor action in 1970

LARGEST PROTESTS SINCE VIETNAM WAR

The factory metaphor even misses the enormous contribution to the economy of the state as a whole. But it also misses all the other forms of protection and empowerment, as well as shaping California civilization.

The factory metaphor even misses its own terms; it misses vital economic truths. Yes, if you have a university education, you have the opportunity to make more, perhaps more than a million dollars more over a lifetime, than if you don’t. But that also means you will pay a lot more taxes to the state, and the company you work for will make more money. Imagine taking all the extra money that the UC and CSU graduates make for themselves and their companies, and estimating how much more they pay in taxes than if they hadn’t gotten a higher education. How much more than making money. It is about coming to know the world, about learning to think critically, and about developing the capac-

By FRED GLASS

Communications Director

California Federation of Teachers

Largest protests since Vietnam War

LARGEST PROTESTS SINCE VIETNAM WAR

The factory metaphor even misses its own terms; it misses vital economic truths. Yes, if you have a university education, you have the opportunity to make more, perhaps more than a million dollars more over a lifetime, than if you don’t. But that also means you will pay a lot more taxes to the state, and the company you work for will make more money. Imagine taking all the extra money that the UC and CSU graduates make for themselves and their companies, and estimating how much more they pay in taxes than if they hadn’t gotten a higher education. How much more than making money. It is about coming to know the world, about learning to think critically, and about developing the capac-

By FRED GLASS

Communications Director

California Federation of Teachers

LARGEST PROTESTS SINCE VIETNAM WAR

The factory metaphor even misses its own terms; it misses vital economic truths. Yes, if you have a university education, you have the opportunity to make more, perhaps more than a million dollars more over a lifetime, than if you don’t. But that also means you will pay a lot more taxes to the state, and the company you work for will make more money. Imagine taking all the extra money that the UC and CSU graduates make for themselves and their companies, and estimating how much more they pay in taxes than if they hadn’t gotten a higher education. How much more than making money. It is about coming to know the world, about learning to think critically, and about developing the capac-

By FRED GLASS

Communications Director

California Federation of Teachers

LARGEST PROTESTS SINCE VIETNAM WAR

The factory metaphor even misses its own terms; it misses vital economic truths. Yes, if you have a university education, you have the opportunity to make more, perhaps more than a million dollars more over a lifetime, than if you don’t. But that also means you will pay a lot more taxes to the state, and the company you work for will make more money. Imagine taking all the extra money that the UC and CSU graduates make for themselves and their(625,409),(973,795)
CRISIS IN CALIFORNIA

Students & unions strike at Univ. of California

Cutbacks at the University of California. Above, a protest on September 24 at UCLA.

Not just about higher education. The says, that is why we have principles caring about one another? Yes, he as President Obama has said, based on the principles that will be durable, that can combine fighting cuts now with a speech Movement in the 1960s. UC Santa Cruz’s solid picket lines and central labor council strike sanc tion turned away union drivers in delivery vehicles and public transit, while elsewhere building trades workers left campus construction sites. Throughout the day, across the state, faculty and students or ganized teach-ins about how to pro tect the “public” in public education.

One month later, on October 24, at a “General Assembly” at UC Berkeley, 800 students, tenure track and contingent faculty, work ers and community supporters met to strategize. A couple hun dred activists attended from CSU campuses, community colleges, and K-12 school districts. Over the course of a highly democratic day, the participants came up with proposals to take back home.

The most important ideas were to build protests a few weeks later to coincide with the Regents meet ing at UCSD. One count that had to make it on his or her own – without pro tection and empowerment by the government. They think, they did it all themselves and that everyone else should, that no one should pay for anyone else – for anyone else’s health care, for anyone else’s education. And they forget that we have all been paying for the roads they use, the energy grid they employ, the educated workers they use, the Cali fornia wines they drink, the public health services they depend on, the courts they depend on, the research that makes their profits rise, and much, much more.

The privatization issue goes well beyond public education. It is about whether we have a democracy that works for the common good, or a plutocracy that priv ileges the wealthy and powerful. Privatizing the world’s greatest public university is a giant step away from democracy.

What is especially scary is that

many in the UC administration ap pear willing to go along with privat ization, assuming it is inevitable. The attitude seems to be that if we make enough cuts, raise tuition enough, and require the majority of students, we can still be a great university, though a smaller private one. It is an illusion. Whether the greatest gos hand-in-hand here. Many of our greatest talents were at tracted to UC because it is a great public univer sity. In the process of cutting and photoncriz ing the university, that talent will be lost and not replenished for a long time. The administration should be taking every step possible to avoid privatization.

The issues at UC cannot be con sidered in a vacuum. The Governor’s determination to privatize UC is part of a larger radical conservative agenda, statewide as well as nation wide. This is ultimately about the choice we make as a society between democracy and plutocracy.

We have been plunged into po litical waters. To save this univer sity, we will have to swim in them. Privatization is the main issue – and it will take work to stop it.

CRISIS IN CALIFORNIA

Our country is in crisis. The California Federation of Teachers (CFT) executive council voted in late November to support the March 4 call for a statewide day of local action, lending legiti macy as well as resources to the student-led October 24 General Assembly’s proposal. The 70,000-member CFT’s leadership and staff have begun outreach to other unions to build a day of unity across educational sectors and between students and workers to highlight the crisis in education funding and the need for progres sive tax policies to address it.

Where this is going next re mains fluid, but one thing is clear: a new generation of students is in the process of political radicaliza tion. In December, undeterred by the Regents’ fee increase, students continued sporadic demonstra tions and police brutality.

Where this is going next re mains fluid, but one thing is clear: a new generation of students is in the process of political radicaliza tion. In December, undeterred by the Regents’ fee increase, students continued sporadic demonstra tions and police brutality.

Where this is going next re mains fluid, but one thing is clear: a new generation of students is in the process of political radicaliza tion. In December, undeterred by the Regents’ fee increase, students continued sporadic demonstra tions and police brutality.
Your retirement: Act now on adjunct pensions

By ELLEN BALLEISEN
PSC Pension Counselor

I have a strong message for CUNY adjuncts who wish to join the New York City Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) but have not yet done so: it’s time to act! The same message applies, in a different way, to adjuncts who belong to TRS but have not yet bought back credit for any prior service, as I’ll explain below.

For the first group, if you are already a member of a public pension system, the New York State constitution provides that your future benefits cannot be reduced. But if you have not yet signed up, and benefits are diminished for future members, you have no such protection – even if you have worked for CUNY for many years.

The fight on Tier V should be a warning.

Heavy lobbying by PSC activists helped CUNY employees to escape inclusion in the newly created Tier V (page 9). Thus, any CUNY adjunct who joins TRS now will still be in Tier IV, which requires employees to make pension contributions of 3% for 10 years. In contrast, as of this January 1, new members of TRS who are employed by the New York City public schools must now contribute 4.85% of gross pay to their TRS pensions until they have 27 years of service credit, and 1.35% of gross pay after they reach the 27-year mark.

This should stand as a warning to all eligible CUNY adjuncts to join TRS as soon as possible. The PSC dodged a bullet this time – but right-wing think tanks and Mayor Bloomberg are big fans of Tier V, and will probably try to expand the new Tier to CUNY employees in the future. By joining TRS now, if you have not already done so, you can protect your benefits against future attacks. So please go to your campus human resources office immediately to get the forms you need.

CUNY adjuncts are generally eligible to join TRS in their first semester of employment as long as they are appointed for at least 45 hours. (There are two exceptions: adjuncts already receiving payments from a New York City or State pension plan, and adjuncts already enrolled in a NYC pension plan other than TRS.)

BUYBACKS

Adjuncts who are already TRS members but who haven’t purchased credit for employment in New York public agencies performed before they joined, should contact me as soon as possible to discuss getting pension credit for this public service.

Why is this so important? Buybacks can increase the value of a TRS pension many times over, and not buying back your prior service is actually a way of allowing CUNY to keep money that should be funding your pensions. That’s a very big chunk of money, much less if you don’t do your buyback, and your pension will be much smaller if you don’t get credit for all your service.

Moreover, in Tier IV, your contributions stop once you have the equivalent of 10 years of full-time service credit. For this reason, a buyback may mean that you no longer have to fork over money to the pension system out of your paychecks – the equivalent of a 3% raise. Also, the value of the buyback increases over time because you must pay interest on the money you owe. So it’s a good idea to pay for your prior service as soon as possible. The longer you wait, the higher the bill will be.

Buybacks cost 3% of total earnings from the time you started at CUNY until you actually pay for that service. The amount you will be required to pay includes 5% interest compounded annually. As someone who has counseled hundreds of adjuncts, I can tell you it’s an investment well worth making.

WHAT’S REQUIRED

The first step in taking care of a buyback is getting a record of service from your campus human resources office. This record should include the number of hours you worked each term, your hourly pay rate each term, your title each term and the dates of each term. It must be on official letterhead and must be signed by someone in the HR office. If you’ve worked at more than one campus, you will need to go to each HR office. The new Tier V adds another twist - you must go to the HR offices of each of the campuses where you have worked.

Next, you’ll need to register. All TRS members have three options for TDAs: you can have one through TRS, or you can open one through TIAA-CREF or HRC. Money in any of these accounts can be rolled over to pay for a TRS buyback.

Enrollment in a TDA with TRS can be done online. Go to the TRS website at www.trs.nyc.ny.us and click on Account Statements. If you have never used this feature of the website before, you will need to register. Once you are registered, log in, and then click on TDA Enrollment. Or, if you want to enroll in a TDA with TIAA-CREF or HRC, you can get the forms from your campus human resources office.

When you are ready to pay for your buyback, the PSC can help make the process go much faster. As soon as you have all the service records you need and the money to pay for your prior service, contact me at eballeisen@pscmail.org, or 212-354-1250 so that I can help you get a bill from TRS. (The one exception is for adjuncts who are also full-time employees of the New York City public schools; those in this category will need to contact their primary union, the UFT or the CSA, or TRS directly.)

When someone at TRS calculates the exact amount of your buyback, he or she will also calculate what is called a service deficit. This is money you owe for service rendered after you officially became a TRS member. Usually there is a gap of several weeks between the date TRS membership begins and the date that the first TRS payroll deduction occurs. Adjuncts who work on two campuses, but have only had payroll deductions on one campus, will also have a service deficit because they did not contribute on their second campus.

LUMP SUM

Service deficits cannot be paid for with TDA rollovers. You will need to pay by check, as a lump sum.

Once you have initiated the buyback process and TRS has calculated the cost of your prior service and your service deficit, TRS will mail you a bill along with paperwork that needs to be notarized. You will need to proceed with this and complete the rest of the steps promptly – as failure to pay by the due date TRS will be required to pay includes 5% interest compounded annually. As someone who has counseled hundreds of adjuncts, I can tell you it’s an investment well worth making.
Imagine that you’re a retiree with a regular pension and your bank balance had fallen below a certain amount. You had got used to receiving retires’ funds are returned

By ELLEN BALLEISEN

Union catches bank’s $187m mistake

Retirees’ funds are returned

By ELLEN BALLEISEN

Imagine that you’re a retiree with a regular pension and your bank balance had fallen below a certain amount. You had got used to receiving

The bank’s error had caused a delay in processing the payments, and retirees had been concerned about the possibility of losing their funds. In response, bank officials agreed to investigate the issue and work to resolve it.

After BNY Mellon management had discovered the problem, they had taken steps to correct the error. They had reversed the payments that had been made incorrectly, and retirees had received their funds back.

BNY Mellon traced the error to Thursday, November 5, 2009, saying that a company statement on November 5, 2009, that was supposed to reverse 92 payments that had been made incorrectly. Instead, according to a BNY Mellon report, the bank “acted after receiving a report of errors in TRS pension payments. Employee and City representatives said it was unacceptable that the bank could move $187 million without “alarm bells going off,” and BNY Mellon acknowledged that the bank had not made any effort to control and accountability over such transaction reversals.

In an immediate response, BNY Mellon said, it now requires three managerial reviews before such reversals are put into effect.

TRS officials noted that when they first contacted the bank about the problem, there was an unacceptable delay before they were put in touch with a BNY Mellon employee who could start working to resolve it.

In response, bank officials agreed to give TRS an emergency phone number that connects directly to a staff member 24/7. The bank said it will review whether other systemic changes are needed, and promised to keep the member help line open as long as TRS wants.
Small grants have big payoff

By JOHN TARLETON

PSC-CUNY Research Awards, made possible largely through support from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, provide for creative work and scholarship in the natural sciences, for whom he receives a PSC-CUNY grant that allowed him to spend the summer conducting research at the College of Arms and Guilds in London.

“It was a huge support for a youngster,” McCoy told Clarion.

Richard Alfano
Distinguished Professor of Physics
City College

Richard Alfano has won numerous PSC-CUNY awards since 1972. While the PSC-CUNY dollars amount to a small fraction of the $83 million in grants Alfano has secured throughout his career, they have helped him jump-start a number of projects that eventually yielded much bigger results.

“It allowed me to get preliminary data. A young guy gets preliminary data and he gets more money,” said Alfano, a pioneer in the development of laser technologies. PSC-CUNY grants were originally known as “FRAPs” (for “Faculty Research Award Program”), and Alfano and others with a long history with the program often still use that name today.

Alfano thinks that the size of the average PSC-CUNY award ($3,000) has grown too small for researchers in the natural sciences, for whom he says $10,000 would be a better figure. He suggests focusing the awards on junior faculty or faculty looking to shift directions in their research, and says that CUNY central administration should double the current pool of money to $7 million.

“They [80th Street] have the money. Don’t tell me they don’t have it squeezed away,” Alfano said. “If you give away some money and you get a 15-1 return, that’s a really good thing. Where else can you get a return on investment like that? You put seeds in the earth, they grow. It’s the same thing.”

Eleanor Cory
Professor of Music
Kingsborough Community College

PSC-CUNY awards have been music to Eleanor Cory’s ears throughout her 18-year tenure at Kingsborough Community College. Cory, a composer, received her first couple of 14 PSC-CUNY grants in 1993 and 1995. The funds helped her record her debut CD, Images, which was released in 1996. She won tenure the following year, and has released two more albums since (Of Mere Being, 2002 and Chasing Time, 2008). Cory has used the money from her grants to help pay for a recording engineer, musicians, and a studio rental.

Garnering increasing acclaim with each new release, Cory has also won grants and awards from the Aaron Copland Fund for Mus- sic, the Alice M. Ditson Fund and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. “When people see you have a CD out, they are willing to fund you for another one,” she noted.

Cory says she is sympathetic to calls that the average size of the PSC-CUNY grants be increased, but says it would be a mistake to achieve that by restricting their number. “If you did fewer, bigger grants, it would be really hard on the junior faculty because they don’t have big profiles yet,” she said.

The support that PSC-CUNY awards provide for creative work and scholarship also benefits CUNY students, Cory said. “I think the students gain, because their professor is doing original work in the field.”

Shaneen Singh
Associate Professor of Biology
Brooklyn College

“It was more like an idea in my mind,” Shaneen Singh said of the biology research project for which she received a PSC-CUNY grant for in 2007. That work enabled her to develop her investigation into the workings of MyTH4, a domain found within a number of protein sequences, and she now has a good shot at external funding from the National Science Foundation or National Institutes of Health.

Mutations in MyTH4 are linked to deafness in humans and mice including Usher Syndrome 1B, the most common form of hereditary deaf-blindness in human children.

Elton, McCoy published an article (“From the Tower to the Tiltyard: Robert Dudley’s Return to Glory”) in The Shakespearean World (2008). This research also laid the foundation for the first of McCoy’s books, The Rites of Knighthood: The Literature and the Politics of Elizabethan Chivalry. He has gone on to write two more books and to become an expert on the politics of Renaissance English culture.

“That kind of travel enabled me to pursue a vein of research that I otherwise would have been unable to do and to develop my career,” McCoy said.

McCoy said that applying for PSC-CUNY money and research awards also helped him master the grant-writing process. In his subsequent career he won many other awards, including two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities as well as fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies.

PSC-CUNY grants are able to play a key role in faculty careers, McCoy said, in part because decisions on awards are made by experts in the same field. “This review is widely regarded as the most legitimate process for allocating resources at the national level,” noted McCoy. “PSC- CUNY grants do the same.”

Paul Marchese
Associate Professor of Physics & Assistant Dean for Academic Operations
Queensborough Community College

Paul Marchese used PSC-CUNY money to win in 2002 for research at CCNY and to buy a software program to measure data for his study of wave motion on the ocean’s surface.

Beyond giving him a leg up with his research work as a junior faculty member, he said the process of winning a PSC-CUNY award helped him in another way: “It was good practice to help get me started on grant writing,” Marchese told Clarion.

Evidently practice makes perfect: to date, Marchese’s work has secured $2.5 million in external grants.

He is currently co-investigator on a $724,000 grant from the National Science Foundation’s Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program, which supports the work of Queensborough’s Technology Academy in offering summer immersion programs, special academic advisement, and other in- technology Academy in offering summer immersion programs, special academic advisement, and other in-
The image was startling: Cary Nelson, newly-elected president of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), sitting in the street next to outgoing AAUP president Jane Buck, in an April 2006 protest against NYU’s refusal to negotiate with its striking graduate student employees. Along with 55 others, Nelson and Buck were arrested in this act of civil disobedience.

A new era at the AAUP had arrived. The AAUP was founded in 1915 to defend academic freedom, and it continues to do so today. The AAUP’s work has changed in response. With universities increasingly organized along more corporate lines, and so many faculty today not on the tenure track, AAUP is organizing in new ways to protect academic freedom and the ability of faculty to do our work.

The PSC is AAUP’s CUNY chapter. As we struggle with these changes at our own university, it is useful to know how the AAUP is tackling them on a national scale. New initiatives are being organized collectively, on both its own behalf and through joint efforts with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

**ADJUNCT RIGHTS**

The AAUP has undertaken a campaign on several fronts to “end ‘at-whim’ employment of non-tenure-track faculty member with 12 years of service; and the University of New Haven (UNH) for the termination of a seven-year non-tenure-track faculty member.

The University of New Haven was censured in 2008 for similar treatment of an adjunct faculty member. In this case, the University’s Academy of UNH was removed in 2009 after the institution adopted procedures providing protection for seven-year part-time faculty, consistent with best practices as recommended by AAUP.

The AAUP has also published a report on “Conversion of Appointments to the Tenure Track” (Fall 2009), urging that “the best practice for institutions of all types is to convert the status of faculty serving contingently to eligible for tenure with only minor changes in job description.” An appendix to the report describes a variety of institutional approaches to conversion.

The corporatization of the American university has meant a wide range of measures designed to centralize authority with top administrators – and this has put shared governance, the responsibility for shared governance, the less likely to communicate with the public as citizens. The AAUP has noted that some interpretations of Garcetti v. Ceballos have a particularly perverse effect: the more a faculty member’s speech is based on disciplinary expertise or is a response to official action, the more likely that this speech would be protected.

The organization’s response to Garcetti has not been limited to the courtroom: the AAUP website provides an action toolkit to help faculty members take grassroots action. Under the headline, “Speak Up, Speak Out,” the website provides links to YouTube videos, opinion pieces, the AAUP’s own report on the case, and other tools.

The AAUP’s investigations of academic freedom violations, carried out by its “Committee A,” are the actions for which it most highly values its freedom of speech. Garcetti v. Ceballos was not itself an academic freedom case; rather, what was at stake was the First Amendment right of a Los Angeles deputy district attorney to criticize his superiors. Narrowing that right, the Court ruled that when persons speak “pursuant to their official duties, the employees aren’t speaking as citizens for First Amendment purposes, and the Constitution does not insulate their communications from employer discipline.”

AAUP President Cary Nelson wrote in the Chronicle of Higher Education, “Violations of the principles of shared governance are often much more complex than investigations of individual academic freedom violations... but they have an insidious effect. ‘If we lose the academic landscape,’ AAUP President Cary Nelson wrote in May-June issue of Academe – AAUP’s first special issue on community college education. The special issue will also feature reports on the corporatization of community college curricula, the history of community college communities, community college faculty organizing, a review of the literature on community colleges and more. The role of community colleges in a national debate about shared attention, but much of that discussion has been somewhat narrow. The discussion in Academe, and at the PSC’s spring conference on community college education, will help give voice to the real experience of faculty members as that discussion proceeds.

As US higher education has moved toward more corporate forms of organization, faculty have shown increased interest in unionization. Collective-bargaining membership for increasing proportion of overall AAUP membership, and the AAUP and American Federation of Teachers have begun jointly organizing with campaigns at the University of Oregon and the University of Washington State. The AAUP’s on its own has just successfully organized the medical faculty at the University of Connecticut Health Center. The first time that faculty at a freestanding medical school have voted to join a union.

The AAUP’s new general secretary, Gary Rhoades is an appropriate leader for these new challenges. An expert on the changing structure of US higher education, Rhoades is regarded as one of most insightful analysts of the transformation of American higher education administration along business lines. He book co-authored with Sheila Slaughter, Academ-ic Capitalism and the New Economy: Mar-kets, Politics, and the University (2007), raises important questions about the purposes and direction of US colleges and universities, and in 2009 Rhoades spoke at the PSC union hall about what this means for CUNY. He returns to speak at the PSC on February 8 (see page 2 for details).

The PSC pays for 1,000 AAUP members annually, for groups of members such as those who hold unionwide or chapter office. There are many opportunities for PSC members to take part in the work of the AAUP – if you are interested, you can contact me at feakay@hotmail.com.

Lenore Beaky is a member of the AAUP National Council and its Executive Committee.

The AAUP fights for faculty

*By LENORE BEAKY
Lafordvia Community College*
Turning up the heat at BCC

By JOHN TARLETON

While Bronx Community College political science professor James Freeman was interviewing a pair of prospective adjuncts, they became alarmed when a mouse scammed across his office floor. For Freeman, who recently experienced a squirrel infestation that left a mess on his desk and his computer keyboard, a rodent sighting was not so unusual.

Faculty, staff and students at BCC’s aging University Heights campus deal with health and safety issues on a daily basis: poor air quality due to uncleaned air ducts; extremely hot or cold classroom temperatures; a lack of clean drinking water; poorly maintained bathrooms; ceiling tiles missing or falling apart; a fenced-off sinkhole in the first floor of the school’s running track and more.

FESTERING PROBLEMS

On November 24, the campus PSC chapter organized a one-day “Hall of Shame” exhibit in the lobby of Meister Hall to highlight these festering problems and pressure the campus administration to take action wherever possible. The exhibit featured six foot high display boards covered front and back with photos and vivid descriptions supplied by faculty and students.

More than 1,000 people visited the exhibit, according to BCC Chapter Chair Nikki McDaniel. Visitors pointed knowingly at the displays when they saw problems they recognized – but seeing so many of the campus’s problems represented in one place left many surprised.

“I thought only Meister was bad, but it turns out a lot of the other problems were worse,” said Associate Professor of Biology Shylaja Akkaraju.

Akkaraju said her greatest frustration was with the lack of bathroom supplies. “We are increasing the number of students but we have the same number of bathrooms,” she said. “We have to check them more than once a day.”

BCC students agreed that the exhibit got them to take a fresh look at campus problems. “It’s hard to study in cold classrooms and wash your hands in cold water. Some of the women’s bathrooms are without stalls,” said Aisha Pearson, a sophomore who plans to graduate with an associate degree in psychology next Spring. “But it becomes normal. You see it every day and think it’s normal and that it’s never going to change.”

Fernando Ortiz, a CLIP student who emigrated from the Dominican Republic last year, said he was surprised to find such conditions at a college in a developed country like the United States. “This is the same as the Dominican Republic,” Ortiz said. “I think it’s discrimination. Poor goes to poor. Rich goes to rich.”

STUDENT CONCERNS

Crumbling ceilings are a common problem at BCC, and Jennifer Goldson, an education major, expressed concern about what could happen if one of her instructors was hit by falling debris. “If one of my professors is knocked out,” she said, “they might have to shut down the section.”

Jason Wright, who transferred from John Jay to BCC this semester, said he always brings his own drinking water to school. Wright said the physical conditions at BCC don’t live up to the quality of its education: “People make assumptions that if buildings look like this, the education must not be any good either,” he said. “And that’s not true.”

McDaniel, an associate professor of biology, said winter was the most challenging time of year at BCC. “It’s really hard teaching a freezing cold class that is bundled up and shivering as they take notes, while I am so cold I can barely hold a piece of chalk between my fingers,” she said.

The idyllic 50-acre campus was opened by NYU in 1894 and sold to CUNY in 1973 when it became home to BCC. It is also home to the “Hall of Fame for Great Americans,” an open-air colonnade with bronze busts of 98 notables from early US history (and the inspiration for the title of the union’s “Hall of Shame” exhibit).

Union activists say BCC faces the twin challenge of modernizing its aging campus while prioritizing day-to-day concerns. Construction is underway at BCC on a number of projects, including a new library and instructional building, and a new childcare center.

“There’s a certain irony in watching a fabulous new building going up when there are so many other problems to be fixed, which can lead to frustration in the BCC community,” said Anne Larsen, a librarian. She noted that construction at BCC also included overhauls of the heating and ventilation systems in Meister and Colston Halls.

“But it’s much harder to find money for those kinds of projects,” said Larsen.

Freeman emphasized that while the maintenance crew at BCC is “hardworking and conscientious,” it has seen its workforce reduced even while BCC’s enrollment surged in the past decade.

One veteran faculty member told Clarion that over the years he had seen BCC’s troubles made worse by high turnover in managers, poor supervision of contractors and a lack of long-range planning. At the November 24 exhibit, hundreds of people signed a petition entitled, “The first call on BCC President Carolyn Williams to address problems that could be fixed immediately, while the second urged Bronx elected officials to support more funding for CUNY.

MANAGEMENT REACTION

The PSC chapter representatives met with management on Dec. 4 to discuss health and safety issues. President Williams was joined by seven other campus officials, and McDaniel said administrators were much more responsive to the union’s concerns than before the “Hall of Shame” event. Union activists pushed for the administration to make fixes by the beginning of the Spring semester, which would not cost a lot of money such as adding doors to open toilet stalls, fixing large holes in two buildings in Meister Hall, and fixing the outdoor lighting in various parts of the campus where people walk to their cars at night.

Management said they would get back to the union as soon as possible. McDaniel said the BCC chapter will hold a day-long retreat in January to discuss continuing the campaign next semester. While getting the BCC administration to pay attention to long-overlooked problems is important, McDaniel says that the larger battle is to win greater State and City support for CUNY and its six community colleges.

“In addition to bringing these conditions to the attention of the college administration, we will be doing the same with the Bronx borough leadership, City Council, and State legislators,” McDaniel told Clarion. “The extreme underfunding of CUNY – and especially CUNY’s community colleges – can’t continue. We need enough funding so we can fix all the problems at BCC, not just a select few.”