Saying the State’s coffers are empty, Gov. David Paterson is threatening to cut at least $84.4 million from CUNY’s senior colleges and enact further reductions in base aid to community colleges. However, the PSC and its allies are proposing a different path: raise new revenues by taxing Wall Street bonuses and reinstating the stock transfer tax. On April 29, PSC members joined the AFL-CIO’s march on Wall Street to demand that the people who created the economic crisis pay their fair share of taxes.

More than 1,000 PSC members participated in 24 campus meetings, where they shared their ideas and visions for the upcoming contract campaign.

Most full-time CUNY employees are now eligible to donate and receive sick days. Negotiations continue over part-timer access to the new program.

According to legions of angry conspiracy theorists, Frances Fox Piven has directed a master plan to destroy America – beginning with a magazine article she wrote in 1966.

More than 1,000 PSC members participated in 24 campus meetings, where they shared their ideas and visions for the upcoming contract campaign.
MAYOR'S PLAN CALLS FOR CUTS

By Glenn Kasak

On May 5, PSC activists and CUNY students went to City Hall to say no to Mayor Bloomberg's proposed cuts to CUNY.

“These cuts are unjust. CUNY needs more money, not less,” said BMC CUNY’s New York PRAGMATIC URBAN POST Colleagues, President of the New York PRAGMATIC URBAN POST COLLEGE, and Photographic Lead Author of the New York PRAGMATIC URBAN POST, who has led the coalition since its inception.

“The cuts to CUNY are estimated to be $2.1 billion in 2011 and $2.2 billion in 2012,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “This is a serious and immediate threat to our institutions.”

Bowen added that the cuts would result in an immediate loss of $3 billion in state revenue, which would have to be made up through additional state funding.

Despite proposed forecasts indicating that a similar request would not be granted in the Fall, the mayor’s proposed reductions would have a significant impact on CUNY.

“I am concerned about the implications of these cuts for our students, our faculty, and our institutions,” said Bowen.

Barbara Bowen and Yolanda Rodriguez with PSCers and CUNY students at City Hall.

News & Letters

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State budget talks stalled

By PETER ROGGUES

The New York State budget was still unresolved as of April 1, when Governor Paterson went to press in May, more than a month past the spending bill’s April 1 deadline. But advocates for CUNY and community college education now have a new chance to convince Albany to change its course.

The standstill in Albany is not necessarily a bad thing, since it allows us to press for more sources of revenue to be included in the budget,” said PSC First Vice President Steve London. “If the budget were to pass today, CUNY senior colleges would be cut by at least $84.4 million and maybe more. The PSC and its allies want to see more State revenue generated by taxing the rich and Wall Street and support jobs bills now in Congress.”

“The State Legislature and governor have focused this year’s State budget entirely on cutting vital programs and public services,” said New York AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes. “The complicit resolve to cut health care, education, transportation and infrastructure shows a blatant political neglect of the working men and women in this state.... That is why voters are angry.”

In addition to slashing State support for CUNY’s senior colleges, Pataki wanted to cut community college base aid and New York’s Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). In their one-house bills, the Senate and Assembly restored most of the governor’s TAP cuts and his proposed $22 million community college reduction. The Assembly bill continues the $84.4 million cut to CUNY senior colleges. The Senate bill adds $22 million in further reductions to CUNY senior colleges, for a total of $106 million.

With the budget long overdue and no agreement in sight, advocates say that boosting State revenue must be part of the discussions.

“Gov. David A. Paterson and the Legislature have weeks spent arguing over how to cut enough spending to close the State’s $8 billion budget gap, with little progress,” The New York Times reported on April 18. “But more liberal forces, such as the Working Families Party, have long argued that the State would have more than enough revenue if it raised State income tax cuts passed during Gov. George E. Pataki’s tenure in the 1990s.”

WALL ST. GIVEBACK

In meetings with legislators, the PSC and its state affiliate, New York State United Teachers, have stressed that cutting CUNY and SUNY will damage New York’s ability to recover from the current economic downturn. They urge the Legislature to reject Paterson’s senior college cuts and his reductions to community college base aid, including a midyear cut imposed in December of $310 per full-time equivalent student. The union also opposes Paterson’s proposed cuts to TAP, starting with his $75 per-student reduction.

Along with more than 60 other unions and community groups, the PSC and NYSUT are supporters of the Better Choice Budget Campaign, which has put forward a range of progressive revenue measures that would close the budget gap without slashing public programs. For example, the campaign supports reducing the rebate on the stock transfer tax from 100% to 80%, which would raise about $3 billion in new revenue. A stock transfer tax is essentially a sales tax on stock transactions, and such taxes are common on major financial exchanges around the world. New York’s stock transfer tax has been on the books since 1981. In 1979, New York began giving a 30% rebate on the amount of tax paid, a rebate that was increased to 60% in 1980 and 100% in 1981. In addition to reducing the rebate to 80%, the coalition suggests “tying the underlying tax rate to a person’s trading volume [so that] the lower the trading volume, the lower the tax. This would lessen the frenzied volatility that caused many of Wall Street’s problems in recent decades.”

In another measure aimed at tapping the wealth of Wall Street, the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) and the Center for Working Families (CWF) have proposed a temporary tax surcharge of 2% on large bonuses, which would generate between $4.7 and $6.9 billion per year. “Wall Street profits surged to over $61 billion in 2009, three times the previous record,” the groups point out in a joint report. “These are truly windfall profits; they argue, made possible by a taxpayer-financed bailout — so a ‘windfall bonus recapture tax’ is an appropriate response to the fiscal problems caused by the financial crash. London already has such a tax; the PPU/CWF version is more tightly focused on the largest payouts. (Their report, New York Has the Ways & Means, includes other revenue proposals and is online at tinyurl.com/BonusTax.)

Opponents of taxing the rich argue that more progressive taxation will lead high income New Yorkers to flee the state — but that view is not supported by the evidence. In 2004, New York enacted a temporary tax increase on those with incomes above $500,000 — and the number of high earners grew by 30% while the tax was in effect. New Jersey enacted a steeper increase on people in this same income bracket in 2002 and by 2004, their numbers had increased by 70%. (What’s more, most people who moved out of New Jersey in this period headed to states with higher income taxes.)

ANGRY VOTERS

It is an article of faith in Albany that it is politically impossible to raise any taxes in an election year. But this bit of Pataki-era wisdom may be out of step with voters’ current mood, in which Wall Street has become one of the country’s most unpopular institutions.

The PSC message has been delivered directly to the governor by President Bowen and to legislative leaders in visits by the PSC Legislation Committee, London told Clario.

Members of the PSC and other unions have also sent thousands of messages to legislators and the governor in support of smart ways to increase State revenue, instead of economically destructive cuts that will only prolong the current recession. (See page 12.)

In mid-April, a delegation of PSC members took part in “Somos el Futuro,” an annual conference in Albany organized by Latino elected officials. They used every chance to press State Senators and Assembly members to fight for more revenue in the budget and push back against the proposed cuts to CUNY.

During the conference, Lizette Colon of Hostos spotted Gov. Paterson walking with an aide. She walked straight over and, joined by several other Hostos union activists, engaged the governor in an extended discussion of what his proposed cuts would mean for Hostos and its students. “That took some guts,” noted Felipe Pimentel, an assistant professor in the school’s sociology department. “Prof. Colon showed tremendous commitment and courage and, as we say in Spanish, ‘carito’ for Hostos and CUNY students – the ones who will suffer the most if the proposed budget cuts are endorsed by the legislature.”

As Albany wrestles with an overdue State budget, the fate of Governor Paterson’s proposal to restructure CUNY and SUNY tuition is also uncertain.

Paterson is pushing for two drastic changes in how tuition is set at New York’s public colleges: giving the administration the power to raise tuition without legislative approval and establishing different tuition rates for different colleges, or even for different majors.

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver has so far opposed both changes — but has come under pressure to change his stance. The PSC says that both proposals would be bad for CUNY, since they would invite further declines in public investment and deny students equal access to all programs of study.

“‘What is at stake is the nature of public higher education and the dangerous tendency to redefine it not as a public good, but a ‘private commodity,’” said Felipe Pimentel, a member of the PSC Executive Council. “Differential tuition would create an unequal tuition structure that may discourage minority and poor students from pursuing their education in the fields of engineering, business, technology and the sciences, since they would have to pay more for those degrees.”

In addition to differential tuition, Paterson wants to allow CUNY and SUNY administrations to raise tuition on their own, without any legislative oversight, within certain very broad limits. Though Paterson calls this a “rational tuition plan,” CUNY students and their families might call it something else: if adopted, it could lead to tuition increases of up to 10% next year, with similar increases possible on an annual basis. Past tuition increases at CUNY have been accompanied by cuts in public funding. “This is being presented as a solution to the funding crisis,” said the PSC’s Steve London. “It is a false solution, and would further impoverish CUNY and our students.”

Tuition plan uncertain

By DANIA RAJENDRA

As Clarion went to press in early May, SUNY has stood for 160 years, PSC President Barbara Bowen said in a City Hall press conference opposing the mayor’s proposed budget for CUNY. She noted that the enrollment caps underscore the fact that CUNY cannot make up for proposed City and State cuts by increasing enrollment or charging higher tuition: “CUNY is a public institution with a mission to educate everyone who wants to go to college,” Bowen said. “Without public investment, we simply can’t serve New York.”
MIT report explores diversity

Inclusion remains elusive

**Conclusion:** The social and political issues that surround the ability to discuss race openly, when necessary, create barriers that can impact the University’s discussion of key issues for faculty. This ultimately impacts the climate at MIT.

**BIAS & MERIT**

**Merritocracy** is a concept that is key to the ideals at MIT. Although it is important to strive for this ideal, there is tension created by the outward presumption that true meritocracy is already essentially achieved at MIT. Such presumptions preempt the potential for discussion of hidden bias or preference behavior and do not acknowledge the use of relatively monolithic criteria of excellence (which often works against those who are minorities by race, gender or field). A community focused on scientific and technological advances, MIT holds a great deal of pride in the concept of a merit-based society in which those who excel are rewarded proportionately. On the other hand, the presence of bias remains a possibility even among those who are most well-intentioned. For that reason, it is not possible to guarantee that racial, gender and other cultural biases do not impact the way in which faculty are evaluated.

In short, it is not possible to proclaim a fully meritocratic process when society presently intrinsically biases to which all can be susceptible on some level. An excellent example involves the differences found in patient evaluations of physicians that resulted in less favorable ratings of minority and Hispanic physicians compared to their non-minority peers. This phenomenon is also present in higher education, where many students have indicated this difficulty can lead to issues in communicating concerns from minority students to faculty and race, and can also impede the ability of faculty, in general, to move beyond unexpressed concerns or cultural misunderstandings. In some cases for example, URM faculty may feel that speaking on diversity as a topic in any way can potentially “brand” them as someone who focuses only on this concern at the expense of other issues.

Examples of situations in which this kind of “silence” can be inhibiting include the discussion around a minority faculty candidate or a promotion case in which comments from a referee, or a negative interaction with specific members of the faculty, might bring about a relevant concern impacted by race or gender. These issues are often extended to faculty discussions around other minority issues, such as URM students and staff, in general, to move beyond unexpressed concerns or cultural misunderstandings. In some cases for example, URM faculty may feel that speaking on diversity as a topic in any way can potentially “brand” them as someone who focuses only on this concern at the expense of other issues.

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**DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE**

**EXPERIENCE of race:** Because of this deep-seated belief that MIT works as a meritocracy, minority faculty have racialized experiences that remain invisible to most non-URM faculty. Here is a first bit of evidence of these racialized experiences, as reported in the survey. Respondents were asked the following question:

*In your daily encounters on the MIT campus, has anyone ever assumed that you were a student, support staff or trespasser?*

Women were more likely than men to be assumed to be a student or support staff. Men were least likely to be assumed to be a student or support staff. All Black women faculty who responded to this question (n=8) reported having been assumed to be a student. And, while most groups had never been assumed to be a trespasser – someone who did not belong on the MIT campus, i.e. trespassing – a shocking 42% of Black men reported having experienced this. Black and Hispanic men were also assumed to be support staff. (See Figure D.1.)

Clearly, some of MIT’s minority faculty live in a different world....Their daily interactions are fraught with experiences most of the faculty cannot fathom. (As one said.)

“In terms of the faculty, there are still so few of us that one’s presence is still so different. I would say a person seeing me might not automatically assume I was a faculty member here, but perhaps in some other instance of sitting at one table waiting for someone to come have lunch. It was kind of towards the edge of the seating area. And some one came up to me that asked to give me money to pay for their lunch and where they should be going to get their food.”

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**Notes:**

New faculty wear union label

Seeking collective solutions

Left to right: Brooklyn PSC activists Carolina Bank Muñoz, Joseph Entin and Scott Dexter each had prior union organizing experience before coming to CUNY.

By JOHN TABLETON

BCC biology professor Nikiri McDaniel was deeply unhappy as a doctoral candidate at the University of California Riverside. Despite being biracial and extra-gender, McDaniel became a picket line captain and led strikers at UC Riverside in chanting and signing. After almost two weeks on strike, they won legal recognition for their union. They subsequently won tuition remission and health care coverage in their first contract and have made other gains since.

Helped organize the party. “You find tremendous power to make important changes,” McDaniel said. “It was exhilarating and empowering—not just because it allowed me to vent some of my frustration, but because we were winning something that made our graduate school a little less unjust.”

For CUNY’s junior faculty, gaining tenure is often a nerve-wracking, seven-year ordeal that feels fraught today. On May 9, the PSC chapters at Queens College and City Tech hosted information events to help make the process clearer and more straightforward. The PSC also hosted Junior Faculty Development Day at the Union Hall on May 7.

The event also featured two panels: one with recently tenured professors discussing how they navigated the process and another with department chairs from each of QC’s four academic divisions. Topics included the candidate’s tenure file and how to best shape it, the campus administration’s review decisions and student evaluations. About two dozen untenured faculty members took part.

“I had so many people say to me, ‘Oh my God, this is the most useful thing I have in my two years at CUNY,’” said Roopali Mukherjee, one of the event’s organizers and an associate professor of film and media studies.

Younger faculty at CUNY say that their union experience has not only led to better working conditions, but has sometimes helped extend their intellectual reach. Scott Dexter, now a professor of computer science at Brooklyn College, was president of the Graduate Employees’ Organization at the University of Michigan when Miller was its chief negotiator. He told Clarion that the union’s walkout, which helped graduate employees win more transparency from departments about their hiring policies and paid training sessions for international students and adjuncts, was preceded by a two-to-three year organizing campaign that focused on member-to-member organizing.

Those conversations introduced Dexter to graduate students from many other disciplines, he said—and they inevitably fell into conversations about everything from their class schedules to the intellectual challenges of their dissertations. Looking back, Dexter says this was the “most transformative part” of his graduate school experience.

In his work at Brooklyn College, Dexter credits that background with orienting him to cross-disciplinary collaboration. He recently co-wrote a book with a member of the school’s philosophy department, Samir Chopra, on the social and philosophical implications of free and open-source software. “I feel more comfortable working with faculty in other disciplines on account of that formative time in graduate school.”

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The session at City Tech featured speakers and discussion on topics such as how to prepare a profession development plan, which decide which publications are sufficient and how to make the best use of re-assigned time for research.

Both veteran academics and those without tenure encouraged junior faculty members to be proactive in defending their rights, both within and outside of the union. Penny Lewis, assistant professor at CUNY’s Joseph Murphy Institute for Labor Studies, urged junior faculty to become active in their union.

“You find tremendous power to make important changes,” McDaniel said. “It was exhilarating and empowering—not just because it allowed me to vent some of my frustration, but because we were winning something that made our graduate school a little less unjust.”

Like McDaniel, a growing number of younger faculty arrive at CUNY with past experience as union members. They’ve concluded that in today’s university and economic climate, being a scholar and a union activist are a natural combination.

An assistant professor of history at LaGuardia, Karen Miller said the university gave her a 12-hour reassignment time (since expanded to 24) aided her own progress toward tenure.

“It was very helpful to have the 12 hours,” Miller told Clarion. “I was able to work on my book and get positive feedback from my publisher.” Based on her dissertation work, the work examines race and politics in Detroit in the 1920s and 30s.

Now an associate professor, Miller was a graduate student activist at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor before she came to CUNY. She was the chief negotiator in a contract campaign that included a two-day walkout by 1,600 graduate employees. Miller said that experience taught her a lot about the “theatrics” of face-to-face negotiations and the importance of mobilizing members in order to exert pressure on management.

The campaign for the most recent PSC contract, Miller was part of that rank-and-file pressure. During negotiations over the union’s contract demand for paid parental leave, she testified at a contract bargaining session—and brought her then two-month-old son with her to the negotiating table. Other members brought their children to bargaining sessions as well, a strategy that PSC President Barbara Bowen credits with helping break the impasse between PSC and CUNY over the issue.

For assistant professor Penny Lewis, the value of the parental leave benefit was brought home when she had to take her five-week-old daughter to the hospital after an accident. Under the old system, Lewis would have been due to return to work the very next day.

“I remember feeling so acutely grateful to the union that we have a more humane system in place for new parents,” said Lewis, who also organized the union on junior faculty issues. The union helped to see the importance of having a union for white-collar workers,” Lewis said.

When Lewis came to CUNY, Lewis was shop steward in a non-profit office represented by UAW Local 2308. The errors of an incompetent supervisor caused repeated problems for staff, but their concerns got little attention—until Lewis and her colleagues threatened to file a grievance. At that point, the Board of Directors began to listen to employees’ complaints, an action that ultimately led to a change in supervision. “It was a very positive experience and
PSC members discuss contract

By JOHN TARLETON

“What are your priorities for the next contract?”

“What do you think the union’s priorities as a whole should be?”

“And what are you willing to do to win what we need?”

With bargaining on a new contract expected to begin later this year, PSC President Barbara Bowen and other PSC officers discussed those questions with members at 24 campus meetings on the contract, held at every campus during Spring semester. Well over 1,000 PSC members attended the meetings, which included sessions with the cross-campus Higher Education Officer (HEO), College Lab Technician (CLT) and Hunter Campus Schools chapters.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

PSC members responded with a range of opinions on negotiating priorities and organizing strategy and filled out suggestion cards on the shape of the union’s bargaining agenda. So far 520 PSCers have signed up to join the Committee of 500, a group of union activists who will play a central role in communicating with and mobilizing the union’s rank-and-file membership throughout the contract campaign.

“This is the beginning of a larger dialogue among our membership about what they want to win in the new contract and how they are going to achieve these victories,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “A process of dialogue and reflection like this will make our union stronger and more united as our contract campaign advances.”

Next the PSC’s 27-member Executive Council (EC) will name a bargaining team. During the summer, members of the bargaining team and the EC will review the extensive member comments from the Spring contract meetings and discuss union priorities. The EC will then recommend the proposed bargaining agenda to the union’s Delegate Assembly, which will vote on adoption of PSC contract demands in the fall.

“Our demands will represent our aspirations for our members and the University,” said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant. “However, they are only words until we exercise our power through a mobilized membership. Between the aspiration and the right lies the fight for a better contract.”

The Committee of 500 is designed to build the leverage the union needs to win its demands in a challenging economic period. On joining, members commit to take six specific steps to advance the contract campaign, such as attending a bargaining session as an observer or telling friends and colleagues about upcoming union actions.

ACTING NOW

The first assignment undertaken by the Committee of 500 members has been to ask two other PSC members about their priorities for the next contract and then forward the responses to union organizers by May 21.

“I think it’s exciting,” said Alan Feigenberg, a professor of architecture at CCNY who joined the Committee of 500 in April. “The more people who get involved, the more the union will be able to represent a broader range of perspectives during the negotiations.”

Comments from some of those who spoke at the meeting appear on these pages.

“Our salaries should be indexed to those of administrators.”

— Yochanan Shachmurove, professor, CCNY

“Librarians are faculty at CUNY. We have the same requirements for promotion and tenure, yet we have to work 35 hours a week all year round. Because our workload is so heavy we have little time for research. We get only six weeks of annual leave — [in fact,] newcomers start with only four weeks and have to build up [from there]. It is an outrage — and I hope you share that [feeling] with me. We demand equity in workload and annual leave and look forward to your support.”

— Mariana Regalado, associate professor, Brooklyn College

“Many universities offer a tuition waiver for family members or children of employees. CUNY does not. If management is unwilling to consider this benefit, perhaps we could suggest that CUNY employees have the ability to transfer their rights to a tuition waiver to another family member?”

— A member at the HEO Chapter contract meeting

“As we begin our bargaining for a new contract, I would like you to consider putting our teaching load as the first priority. Instead of asking for raises and equitable pay, which no matter how just will not make us better teachers, perhaps we should concentrate on reducing the impossible teaching load at the community colleges.”

— written statement from Roni Ben-Nun, asst. professor, BCC

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— A member at the HEO Chapter contract meeting
“I’ve been here since 1987, teaching for almost 40 years. I really just want to put my name on record as saying that the situation of part-timers, parity for all part-timers [is] the biggest issue. I don’t want to retire with this situation of injustice. It is absolutely an injustice and it breaks my heart. I love CUNY and I love teaching, but this is unacceptable.” — Ros Petchesky, distinguished professor, Hunter

“Growing enrollment has had a huge effect on HEOS. I have heard from HEOS members about all that needs to be done for the student body and for the new programs being implemented. And there is hardly an increase in hiring.” — Andrea Vásquez, HE associate, Graduate Center

“In a given semester I have 85 students, so I have 85 tests to grade. I could easily give a multiple choice test which I run through a machine, but not in good conscience. That’s not a quality education. Where’s my reward for all the extra work I do? I spend almost as much time grading as I do teaching.” — Justin Campoy, adjunct asst. professor, BCC

“To be nationally competitive in terms of hiring, teaching load is a huge issue. It’s hard to publish with our teaching load. I was recruiting at a national conference, and when I told people our teaching load, they were out the door unless they wanted desperately to live in New York City.” — Naomi Gardberg, associate professor, Baruch

“Committee of 500
If you have not yet joined the Committee of 500, you can sign up online at www.psc-cuny.org/committee500.htm. For more information or to get a sign-up card in the mail, contact PSC Organizing Director Rob Murray at (212) 354-1252 or rmurray@pscmail.org.

“I need to teach fewer classes so that I can see more of my students. To teach a 27-hour workload prevents me from giving my students the individual attention they deserve. And my students need more, not less of my time and attention.” — Enid Stubin, assistant professor, Kingsborough CC

“Here 40 years, I feel HEOS are forgotten. I’ve been an associate, I cannot make a full HEO. I have with CUNY First, and I’m still sitting here.” — Gloria Cotopassi, HE associate, CSI

Committee of 500
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PSC gains dedicated sick leave program

Rules modeled on those of City

By MORIAH BERGER

CUNY now has a dedicated sick leave program, allowing eligible employees to receive sick days, donated by other employees, when they have exhausted their own sick leave and are facing a serious illness or injury requiring at least 30 days out of work. The program arises from a PSC contract demand and fulfills a commitment made in the current PSC-CUNY collective bargaining agreement to negotiate a dedicated sick leave program. “This is a breakthrough many of us have wanted for a long time,” said union President Barbara Bowen. “It allows us to use an individual benefit collectively, in the best tradition of unionism.”

The program allows eligible full-time employees to donate or receive sick or annual leave. Donations are made by deducting a certain number of days of accrued benefit limits, employer and employee contributions. The program can be used in cases of serious illness or injury that are not job-related and involve an absence of at least 30 work days. Supporting medical documentation is required. The program’s eligibility rules, which are modeled on those of the City, require that a recipient of dedicated leave have two continuous years of full-time service with CUNY and have exhausted all of his or her annual leave, sick leave, compensatory time balances and sick leave advancements. (The full text of the agreement is at tinyurl.com/CUNYLeave.)

EQUIVALENCIES

Two days of donated sick leave allows the recipient to take one day of sick leave, while donating one day of accrued annual leave entitles an eligible recipient to a full day of leave for their illness or injury. (Note that only already accrued leave may be donated. Because full-time teaching faculty cannot accrue annual leave over time, they can donate only sick leave.)

In order to donate sick leave, a donor must have five or more continuous years of full-time service with CUNY. Donors must maintain a balance of at least 24 days of sick leave, but otherwise may donate up to 10 days of sick leave per year. For those who wish to dedicate accrued annual leave, there is no service requirement, nor is there any cap on the number of days that may be donated.

College Human Resources Offices are responsible for implementing the dedicated sick leave benefit. See your HR Office for program details and application forms. Decisions to donate leave are irrevocable and one’s identity is kept confidential. Information on dedicated sick leave is also available on the PSC website.

The labor-management discussions on the implementation of dedicated sick leave were conducted jointly by the different unions representing affected instructional and classified staff at CUNY, a first for labor relations at CUNY. PSC, DC37 and the Teamsters were all at the table and the resulting dedicated sick leave program is a benefit shared across unions. Full-time faculty and staff can donate and receive leave from their PSC colleagues and also to or from department secretaries and custodial workers.

Negotiations with CUNY regarding the inclusion of part-timers are continuing. The PSC has emphasized extending the benefit to part-timers as a union priority. Since adjuncts cannot accumulate sick days, they often have the greatest need for the solidarity this benefit could provide.
By WILLIAM TABB
Queens College

Tea Party targets CUNY prof

F rances Fox Piven, distinguished Professor of political science and sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center, has been widely described as one of the most honored faculty members at the CUNY Graduate Center. Piven is past president of the American Sociological Association and vice president of the American Political Science Association – and according to Glenn Beck, she is also author of a master plan that engineered the current economic crisis and seeks to destroy America. Beck has developed this thesis on at least 30 episodes of his Fox News TV program.

Put “Cloward-Piven strategy” into a search engine and you will find 30,000 entries full of vitriol and slander. According to Beck, Rush Limbaugh and the “Tea Party” far right, Piven and Richard Cloward developed a plan in the 1960s that has guided the left ever since, and which has finally achieved a socialist takeover of the United States with the election of Barack Obama.

The attacks on Professor Piven are in the tradition of the long and distressing history of anti-intellectualism in America and the “paranoid style” in American politics, which often surfaces in response to rapid social and economic change and struggles for social justice. Indeed, for the Glenn Becks of the world, the very term “social justice” is anti-American. Holding the hands of a hammer and sickle, Beck told his viewers on March 2 that “social justice” amounts to a hammer and sickle, Beck told his viewers on March 2 that “social justice” amounts to “code words” for totalitarianism.

CONSPIRACY THEORY

The enemy for Beck is what he calls “progressivism,” and in his conspiracy theory it begins with Woodrow Wilson and the progressive income tax. But the modern focal point of the conspiracy is the “progressivism,” and in his conspiracy theory Beck says that Obama is faithfully following this strategy when he advances the stimulus package, the health reform bill or proposals to address climate change. They are all designed to bankrupt America, provoking economic collapse and a Washington takeover of the economy. Hence Professor Piven has been characterized as the most dangerous – and perhaps most powerful woman in America.

The blueprint, according to Beck and the many others who adopt this theory, is to be found in a 1966 essay in The Nation magazine, in which Cloward and Piven wrote that if everyone entitled to welfare actually applied for it, it would overload the bureaucracy and force welfare reform along more rational lines – perhaps a family allowance system similar to that in European social democracies. Working with organizer George Wiley, they later helped create the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), which had affiliates in 60 cities in the late 1960s. The NWRO did hold militant demonstrations at welfare offices and had some success in changing the treatment and entitlements of recipients. Responding to the militancy of the poor that Cloward and Piven encouraged, even more radical and his domestic policy adviser Daniel Patrick Moynihan considered endorsing a basic-income approach.

In Beck’s portrayal of the “Cloward-Piven strategy,” the “ultimate objective is to have everybody in the country on welfare, by destroying it.” An article published online by David Horowitz tries to raise this to a general principle: it defines the “Cloward-Piven strategy” as “the strategy of forcing political change through orchestrated crisis.” But neither Cloward nor Piven ever articulated such a strategy, and The Nation essay said nothing about destroying capitalism. Instead, it expressed the authors’ lifelong belief that it is the self-activity of the oppressed which is capable of forcing social change in their interests.

Piven and Cloward (her husband who died in 2007) are the two central figures of this conspiracy thesis, was deliberately an economic failure which, according to President Clinton when he signed the bill, was “the raw material” for the creation of a “sick economy” that was fueled by policies the “Tea Party” and B. A. Cloward and who says it would be a good idea to have 10 million illegal votes counted as legitimate, it must be a powerful strategy indeed.

ACADEMIA UNDER ATTACK

Blaming the Poor

Professor Piven is said to be responsible for bringing the American economy down, an economic failure which, according to this conspiracy theory, was deliberately planned. How was this achieved? As one proponent explains, the socialists needed a device “that would destroy free-enterprise market systems...This little bomb was the ‘Motor Voter’ law, it aimed to increase the number of Americans who vote.

Video of the signing ceremony is played by Beck and others to show that Clinton was Piven and Cloward’s puppet. According to James Simpson, one of the most active popularizers of the Cloward-Piven conspiracy theory, the impact of the law was to “register vast numbers of illegal aliens who then reliably vote Democrat,” thus allowing policies which “rip the guts out of the private economy.” This make-believe is meant to counter the careful research by Cloward and Piven in their influential academic intervention, Why Americans Don’t Vote, which examined the forces that held down political participation among the poor, African Americans and others, and how this might be changed.

PARANOIA

Paranoia about voter fraud is fueled by the conviction among many that a black man named Barack Hussein Obama could not possibly have become president of the United States through legitimate means. Those who insist, contrary to all evidence, that Obama was not born in the US are also quick to believe that Obama owes his 53%-46% victory to fraud and the mysterious “Cloward-Piven strategy.” Since this would have required successfully getting some 10 million illegal votes counted as legitimate, it must be a powerful strategy indeed.

Here ACORN, one of the right wing’s favorite villains, is drafted into the master narrative. On the basis of slim connections (e.g., some welfare rights organizers went on to work with ACORN), the organization is declared to be Piven and Cloward’s creation. Obama in turn is described as either ACORN’s master or its stooge, depending on the telling.

Like Piven, ACORN became a target for baseless charges of voter fraud because of its success at increasing poor people’s participation in the political process. In 2009 the Congressional Research Service, a non-partisan investigational arm of Congress, reported to the House Judiciary Committee: “There were no instances of individuals who were allegedly registered to vote improperly by ACORN or its employees.” But ACORN is nonetheless held up as the vehicle through which the “Cloward-Piven strategy” was executed.

Blaming the Poor

Professor Piven is said to be responsible for bringing the American economy down, an economic failure which, according to this conspiracy theory, was deliberately planned. How was this achieved? As one proponent explains, the socialists needed a device “that would destroy free-enterprise market systems...This little bomb was called the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) of 1977.”

In fact, the logic behind CRA was that some part of residents’ deposits in neighborhood banks should be reinvested in their communities. Some banks literally or figuratively drew red lines around low income neighborhoods and refused to make loans there. By the time of the subprime crisis, this 1977 legislation was thirty years old, and its requirements had been less and less followed by banks or enforced by regulators. But more importantly, the CRA made very little or no difference at all in mortgage practices in the years in which the subprime crisis came to a head. The overwhelming majority of subprime mortgages were written by finance companies not subject to the law. The charge that banks were forced to help the poor is simply wrong.

The 2008 crash was not caused by poor people, but by financiers. Wall Street had an insatiable demand for mortgages, since they were the “raw material” for the creation of collateralized debt obligations that were sold on the bond market. Turning mortgage of questionable value into securitized products was a route to riches – until it produced the collapse of the economy. Neither the boom nor the bust had anything to do with the fictitious “Cloward-Piven strategy.”

If one is looking for a powerful figure responsible for encouraging irresponsible subprime lending, one would need to look elsewhere. As an article in The New York Times reported, “From his earliest days in office, Mr. Bush paired his belief that Americans do best when they own their own home with his conviction that markets do best when left alone. He pushed hard to expand home ownership, especially among minorities, as an initiative that illustrated his ambition to expand the Republican tent – and with the business interests of some of his biggest donors. But his housing policies and hands-off approach to regulation encouraged lax lending standards.”

POLICIES FROM THE TOP

For years George W. Bush ignored warnings from experts within and outside Washington that these policies would lead to massive defaults. Much of the problem, as Bush economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey had warned, was that no one wanted to stop the bubble, which was fueled by policies the president wanted and which was so profitable for so many.

A change in policy would not have been appreciated. This was especially true for major campaign contributors in the mortgage industry. Among them was Roland Arnall, founder of Ameriquest, then the nation’s largest supplier of subprime loans. He and his company invested $20 million in political donations and got looser state laws controlling mortgage origination. The company was forced to settle allegations in 30 states that it had preyed on borrowers with balloon payment mortgages and hidden fees, in some cases forcing people to leave their own home with his conviction that markets do best when left alone. He pushed hard to expand home ownership, especially among minorities, as an initiative that illustrated his ambition to expand the Republican tent — and with the business interests of some of his biggest donors. But his housing policies and hands-off approach to regulation encouraged lax lending standards.”

We remember, thanks to the scholarship of Frances Fox Piven, that to poor people’s movements and those who support them have always had victories, even when they showed signs of success. But those movements have drawn support from the best impulses of the American people. We need to remember, as we engage the attacks on a colleague who has devoted her considerable intellectual and activist energy to supporting social change – for it is the effectiveness of both her scholarship and her advocacy that has made her a target.
Faculty space: the final frontier

By DAVID LABMAN
Brooklyn College and Graduate Center

N the April issue of Clarion included two features concerning the forthcoming contract negotiations. The wealth of input from members on everything from salary steps to workload, adjunct parity, the Welfare Fund and more is a hopeful sign that a solid bottom-up movement is emerging, putting strength behind our bargaining position on a wide range of issues.

There is a major blind spot, however, and I would like to draw attention to it. No one seems to be talking about the physical structuring of working space. This is one aspect of the overall quality of our work environment, which includes concerns that range from health and safety issues to cleanliness. Problems need to be addressed in every area, and one issue should not be counterposed to others. I believe, however, that the central importance of the basic structure of a faculty member’s work space has not been well understood. On my campus, this varies from department to department; there is likely much variation among colleges as well. We need, for a start, much more information on actual conditions. Casual but long experience suggests to me that these conditions are highly inadequate for many.

MINIMUM STANDARDS

Let me be blunt. Shared “staffrooms” or “cubicles” simply do not meet the requirements of offices for college professors. Without personal working space that provides privacy and access to phones, computer, books, conversations with colleagues and students, and simply a quiet place in which to work, faculty simply cannot fulfill their professional roles on campus. And, to a large degree, they don’t: my colleagues work at home as much as possible or at other off-campus locations where conditions are consistent with professional respect. College life suffers; students especially lack the opportunity to interact with faculty and to observe faculty as they interact with each other. Be honest: are you proud of the working environment on your campus? Would you invite colleagues from outside to join you there? Again, the core issue I am raising is the existence of private office space; of course the quality of that space, cleanliness, facilities, state of telephone and internet access, common areas for faculty and staff, faculty lounges, as well as secretarial and clerical support, must also come into the picture.

Full-time faculty lack offices, our part-time colleagues often lack even such basics as a desk, chair, computer and telephone. In past contract negotiations, CUNY has resisted union demands to provide adjunct faculty members with a desk and a chair – this is inexcusable. Minimum standards must be built into the contract, for all members of the instructional staff.

Unless substantial conditions are remedied, where they exist, recruitment of quality younger faculty will suffer, as will the entire mission of CUNY, which is so much a part of our thinking concerning all contract issues. Inequality among departments and colleges should not be an obstacle; the goal must be to “equalize up.” Situations must be addressed at each separate location, of course, but the new contract requiring commitment on the part of the University to address issues concerning faculty work space, and to support campuses as they begin to look into these issues, would be a very necessary step in the right direction.

CUNY profs need a place to work

The US’s forgotten holiday

On May 1 in lower Manhattan, closer to 10,000 people took part in a rally for labor and immigrant rights. Organized by the Coalition for Labor and Immigrant Rights & Jobs for All, the protest’s more than 70 endorsers included PSC, UFT, NYUIST, Laborers, Teamsters and UFCW locals, DC17, Local 1199, SEIU 32BJ-STW, Local 100, Tizzi Workers’ Alliance, Left Labor Project, WFP, NAACP, NY Civic Participation Project, NY Immigration Coalition, Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights, and a range of local organizations in immigrant communities.

The PSC played a major role in shaping the coalition’s platform (at tingleur.com/May1 Platform) and helped draft a short history of May Day, which the coalition produced and distributed to marchers and the public. Text of the latter is below; a trilingual version is online at psc-cung.org/PDF/MayDayHistory.pdf.

May Day, the international workers’ holiday, began in the United States. Its roots go back to Chicago, in 1886. Foremen at the McCormick Reaper Works, a factory of the nation’s factories and mines were growing fast. They employed hundreds of thousands of working-class families couldn’t find work in the nation’s factories and mines were growing fast. They employed hundreds of thousands of working-class families couldn’t find work. Two days later, with the strike gaining momentum, the Chicago police shot two strikers and wounded dozens more at the giant McCormick Reaper Works.

The anarchists organized a demonstration to protest the shootings on May 4 in Chicago’s Haymarket Square. As that rally neared its end, 200 police entered the square and demanded that the remaining protestors disperse. From the darkness someone (whose identity has never been determined) threw a dynamite bomb, killing one policeman and wounding 70 others.

In the chaos and hysteria that followed, the authorities smashed Chicago’s labor movement. The Chicago police arrested anarchist leaders Albert Parsons and August Spies and six others and charged them with murder – even though there was no real evidence against them. They were convicted nearly unanimously of them, including Parsons, were hanged in November 1887.

MASSIVE STRIKE

After 1886, workers and labor radicals around the world began celebrating May 1 as a day of international working-class solidarity to demand the eight-hour day. In 1890, huge May Day demonstrations in the United States, across Europe and in Australia and Cuba demanded eight hours. The international labor movement denounced the frame-up of the “Haymarket martyrs” and demanded that those still in prison be freed. (They were pardoned by a pro-labor governor in 1893.)

American business leaders and the mainstream press wanted to distance the US from May Day because of its radical roots. With business support, in 1894 President Cleveland officially declared the first Monday in September as Labor Day.

BACK TO THE USA

Around the world, workers continued to celebrate May Day as International Workers Day. In the United States, especially after the Russian Revolution, this made-in-US holiday was denounced as “un-American.” Regular celebrations of May Day continued anyway in New York’s Union Square. But after the 1890s, the left in the labor movement came under sharper attack, and US May Day celebrations grew smaller and smaller.

Today May Day is coming back to the country where it began. Millions of immigrant workers from Latin America, Asia and the United States, bringing their own experience in union struggles. They have always known that May Day is the workers’ day. As more immigrants join the US working class and organize for their rights, immigration laws have increasingly been used to fire union members and break up union drives.

In response, the labor movement started speaking out in support of immigrants’ rights. In 1999 the AFL-CIO called for repeal of the anti-immigrant law that makes work a crime. Instead, it called for legal status for the undocumented, reuniting immigrant families and protecting organizing rights for everyone.

On May 1, 2006, millions of immigrant workers poured into the streets in the Great American Protest against the job and marching against anti-immigrant legislation then being considered by Congress. Many unions supported this May Day protest and have done so in the years that followed.

Today May Day belongs to us all. We march to demand equal labor rights and jobs for all. We march to carry forward the May Day tradition that began in 1886 and re-new it for our new century.

Steve Leberstein (left) and Costos Panayotakis (right) carry the PSC’s banner at this year’s May Day rally.
am and Maria are administrative assistants who are pretty good at their jobs. Both have roughly the same levels of education and experience. But Pam earns about $4,000 more a year than Maria – and also has greater job security since they work in government. Government workers are increasingly better off compared to private sector workers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average salary for the approximately 330,000 office clerks who work in government is nearly $72,000. For the 2.7 million in the private sector, average pay is about $32,000.

Across the nation, 86% of state and local government workers have access to employer-provided health insurance, while only 45% of private sector workers do. In New York State, all government employees can access employer-supported medical, dental and vision benefits. In the private sector, only 34% of employees have access to medical plans, 64% to dental plans, and 87% to vision.

The transformation of the American economy over the last 30 years has caused public and private sector work to diverge sharply. Vast economic changes, especially globalization, have unleashed a "gale of creative destruction" in the private economy, increasing economic inequality, weakening private sector unions and straining the middle class. Whatever one thinks of the costs and benefits of these dramatic changes, one thing is clear: the public sector has been largely unscathed. This is because civil service protections, government workers' unions and their powerful political allies have sheltered public employees.

To point this out is not to attack public employees. They do undoubtedly necessary work. Teachers, cops, firefighters, correction officers, sanitation workers, nurses and road repairmen provide goods that benefit all. But once upon a time, they earned lower pay than comparable workers in the private economy in exchange for enhanced benefits and more job security.

**MIDDLE-CLASS STABILITY**

No longer. The trend lines have crossed. Public sector wages have on average surpassed those in the private sector. If one includes benefits and other forms of compensation, the gap is even wider. Today's public sector provides a stable middle-class existence for nearly everyone from janitors to janitors. Meanwhile, in the private sector economy, cut throat competition, pay cuts, layoffs and higher taxes squeeze the middle class.

Public employee unions exacerbate the situation. They can exert great influence on their employers' policies, meaning, on government itself – through the political process. They make campaign contributions and organize get-out-the-vote drives to elect politicians who then act as "management" in negotiations over pay, benefits and work rules. These unions also enjoy greater access to the political process through the collective bargaining process and more stable revenue streams than other interest groups.

**The results are striking. With union muscle behind them, New Jersey's teachers are some of the highest paid in the country. Average retirement pensions for New York State police officers and firefighters are more than $75,000 annually. Public sector union's power has saddled the Garden and Empire states with some of the heaviest tax burdens in the nation. While the purpose of these unions is to advance member's interests, the advantages they enjoy over other interest groups tempt them to play them off one another.**

If we continue to ignore the growing public-private gap, the implications will be dire. Already, it has led to massive budget deficits in most states and cities throughout the country. Future generations are on the hook for enormous pension commitments, which threaten to crowd out other spending priorities. Meanwhile, restrictive union work rules create barriers to efficient delivery of public services. Taxpayers are paying more for less. Furthermore, a backlash against public workers looms. While private sector employees were hit with job losses and pay cuts, Mayor Bloomberg negotiated 4% raises with most of the City's unions, and Gov. Paterson has avoided virtually any layoffs despite a massive budget deficit. Such disparities breed resentment among those struggling in the private sector. A recent skit on Saturday Night Live played on exactly this sentiment.

**PARITY**

From New Jersey Republican Chris Christie to New York Democrat David Paterson, politicians are saying that there must be parity in wages and benefits between public and private sector employees. Unions that "just say no" to proposed reforms will find their power becomes an increasingly precarious political position.

Ultimately, what citizens' tax dollars buy us depends, in part, on the number of public servants and how much they are paid. The public should be fair to them. But they also need to be fair to the public.

A previous version of this article appeared in the New York Daily News on March 12.

When CUNY loses promising faculty to other schools, that's not good news for students. The picture for public employees is not as rosy form as or uniform as critics describe. Nonetheless, it's true that public employees as a whole are more likely to have health insurance, pensions or paid sick days than those in the private sector. Is it fair for workers to have these things?

The restaurant industry provides a helpful example. A previous version of this article appeared in the New York Daily News. The National Restaurant Association is the tenth most powerful lobbying group in Congress. It made sure that Congress increased the minimum wage, the minimum for tipped workers was kept at $2.13 – as it has been for 20 years. For most NYC restaurant workers and their families, the minimum wage is the "stable middle-class existence" that Disalvo claims all public workers enjoy. Those who have health insurance will lose it – and their job – if they miss more than a few days of work due to illness. That's a grim picture for an adjunct with cancer who has to decide whether to start chemotherapy. Even adjuncts who have worked at CUNY for 20 years have zero job security. And CUNY pays them poverty wages.

At CUNY, action is definitely needed on public worker benefits and wages – action to bring them up. The substandard conditions faced by adjuncts exert a downward pull on full-timers' wages and benefits, and we all need to make sure they are improved.

CUNY's full-time faculty are underpaid compared to those at similar institutions, such as Rutgers or UConn – and raising CUNY salaries to close the gap would be in the public interest. For most NYC restaurant workers and their families, City University is the best (or only) affordable option for a college education.

What stands between restaurant workers and better wages and benefits is not public workers' unions – those unions are their allies. What stands in the way is the power of their private sector employers. According to Fortune Magazine, the National Restaurant Association is the seventh most powerful lobbying group in Congress. It made sure that even when Congress raised the minimum wage, the minimum for tipped workers was kept at $2.13 – as it has been for 20 years.

**RACE TO THE BOTTOM?**

**Unions not the enemy**

By SARU JAYARAMAN

As a CUNY faculty member, I am a public employee. But 10 years ago I co-founded an organization for the protection of adjunct and non-faculty workforce in the nation – restaurant workers – and I have worked with Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC-United) for the last decade. Like many in the private sector, restaurant workers make too little money and have too few benefits. Nationwide, the median wage for restaurant workers is a poverty-level $8.59 per hour. In a 2005 review of more than 4,000 surveys of restaurant workers, ROC-United found that 90% of those surveyed did not have access to health benefits. But if public employees' wages are cut, that will not give restaurant workers a raise. If benefits are slashed in the public sector, that won't help restaurant workers get health insurance.

Restaurant workers earn low wages and have low benefits because they have little collective power. ROC-United is working to change that – but less than 1% of all NYC restaurant workers are unionized. Attacks on public-sector unions will weaken, not strengthen, restaurant workers' ability to improve their lives. If we move toward a future in which no one has, for example, a decent pension, how can restaurant workers expect to ever achieve it themselves?
RF workers demand fair first contract

By JOHN TABLERON

More than 80% of CUNY Research Foundation (RF) employees at LaGuardia, City Tech and the Graduate Center have voted for union representation with the PSC. But their desire for the protections of a union contract has been thwarted for years by management’s obstruction and delay.

Now, however, a gradual accumulation of progress at the bargaining table has brought the two sides closer to agreement than ever before. So Research Foundation employees on the three campuses are jumping-starting their contract campaign to make sure they get a settlement worthy of their long wait—their organizing began when John Kerry was running for the Democratic Party nomination for president and Alex Rodriguez was still a Texas Ranger.

“This has been going on so long, but now there is an end point,” said Maurice Pinzon, registration counselor at LaGuardia’s Adult Learning Center and a member of the union bargaining team. “The contract has come down to the economic reality.”

RIDICULOUS

To date, the union has successfully negotiated contract language on grievance and discipline procedures, the work week, sick leave, use of family and medical leave, and other measures that incorporate existing policies into provisions that cannot be changed unilaterally. The bargaining teams have also negotiated a tentative agreement on annual leave that ensures carryover of accrued leave from one appointment period to the next. None of these agreements is final, though, until the entire contract is tabled and put to a vote on campus.

The RF is offering raises of just 1.25% per year (if any employee has not already received a raise), and only for employees with at least two years of service. At the same time, RF management is demanding that employees on the three campuses accept an immediate increase in their share of health care premiums, from 13% to 19%.

The RF has increased the amount paid to Nixon Peabody, a union-busting law firm. “The amount paid to Nixon Peabody for one year alone is enough to provide a 4.5% increase per year to RF-CUNY employees at all three locations currently in negotiations,” the petition points out. “What are the priorities of the RF-CUNY when funds are taken from hard-earned grants, and used for lawyers to fight the union representing its employees?”

The Research Foundation administers grant-funded projects at CUNY; those paid out of grants get their paychecks from the RF. Though the RF is closely linked to CUNY, the University maintains that RF is a separate private sector entity, and therefore exempt from the State laws on public-employee labor relations. Many RF employees, however, do similar administrative or instructional work as those whose paychecks come from CUNY.

Also while some employees have worked for the RF for more than 10 years, most have worked there for three years or less. All have appointment periods that run from several weeks to a year and are often paid from multiple grants.

“Grant-funded employment is not secure,” said Deborah Bell, PSC executive director, “and these employees bear the brunt of that insecurity, losing accrued leave when they shift from one grant to another or being laid off when the money runs out, even if their appointment period hasn’t ended. One of the PSC’s goals has been to negotiate a contract that will bring some regularity and predictability to a very irregular employment situation.”

RF activists like Pinzon and Pierre-Louis are forming contract action teams on their campuses to press for a final agreement. At LaGuardia, a half-dozen RF members attended a Learn to Win meeting on April 21, at which they discussed strategy with union organizers. Now they are reaching out to other members of the bargaining unit.

“We have a very nice nucleus here at LaGuardia,” noted Pinzon, who said members will have to develop creative tactics to make their demands heard. “Just because we are scattered and work different hours, doesn’t mean we aren’t united,” said Clarion. “We may come up with some surprises.”

Iida Heyman, who works as a program counselor in the same office as Pinzon, said she joined the campaign because she was frustrated by management’s unclear personnel policies that make it impossible for her to accumulate sick days or vacation days. “Going to the union seemed like a good idea,” said Heyman, who has worked at LaGuardia’s Adult Learning Center since 2007.

OUTREACH

Heyman says RF workers will be treated more fairly when management policies are codified in contractual language. Right now, she said, “If I have a question or an issue, I don’t know where to bring it.”

At City Tech, a half-dozen RF workers decided to join their campus’s contract action team after attending an April 26 meeting led by bargaining team member Jay Klokker and PSC Organizing Coordinator Alisa Simmons. They included some who had previously been active in the union effort who decided that now was the time to renew their involvement.

ACTION TEAMS

One of the union’s demands is that the Research Foundation grant longevity pay as it does to workers at the RF Central Office.

“We have people who have been here five, 10 or even 20 years and we want that to be recognized,” Klokker said.

Olga Jimenez, an administrative assistant in the provost’s office, attended a union meeting at the Graduate Center on April 27 and decided to get involved. Georgina Pierre-Louis has been helping to energize the Grad Center contract campaign, and she attended a Learn to Win meeting at City Tech.

“If each person would do the same, little by little, we can build our strength,” said Pierre-Louis, who helped organize workers in the Haitian garment industry during the late 1980s. “We should not get discouraged when we are organizing.”

Union meetings for campus-based RF employees have featured visits from union activists at the RF Central Office, who fought a spirited 13-month contract campaign that concluded in December. They won a 13% raise over four years, instead of the 2% raise over three years originally offered by management.

“Constant communication among members was the key to our success,” said Dawn Sievers, secretary of the Central Office union chapter.

PSC union leaders at LaGuardia and City Tech have also expressed support for the RF workers.

“At any injury to one is an injury to all,” said City Tech Chapter Chair Bob Cermel. “Many of these people do the same work as our members, and they deserve the same treatment.”

Organizing push is on from left: PSC Organizing Coordinator Alisa Simmons & Georgina Pierre-Louis.