Textbook prices have climbed at twice the rate of inflation, and they can cost students more than $1,000 per year. A variety of possible alternatives are being explored, from textbook rentals to “open access” publishing online. Congress is considering legislation that would offer grants to faculty whose textbooks are published over the internet with less restrictive copyright protection. When the bill’s sponsor asked the American Federation of Teachers for input, the AFT contacted PSC President Barbara Bowen, who invited PSC members to express their views. The result was a spirited debate.
Letters to the editor

We need to win the fight for health care reform

I urge all of us to join — individually and as a union — to do whatever we can to get Congress to enact health care reform this year.

Our union has taken a strong position for a maximum program. The current House bill falls far short of a single-payer system, but it does include key provisions — a public option, universal coverage, lower costs and progressive financing that don’t rely on taxing workers’ current benefits — that are worth fighting for. Organized labor continues to be integral to this fight.

However, the opposition is extremely well-funded, ferocious and devious. It has confounded and frightened many people. Our benefits are already described as too costly for taxpayers to support. If we wind up as an island in a sea of uninsured, it will be harder to defend the benefits we currently have and easier for the opposition to turn working people against one another. A defeat in this arena will also embolden the opposition to defeat the Employee Free Choice Act and to go after Medicare and Social Security.

An all-out push for effective health care reform now should be taken up at every opportunity, including the Labor Day March/Parade. This is a time to build our efforts.

John Hyland
LaGuardia (emeritus)

Parental leave

Our son, Samuel James, was born last Monday, August 3, at 11:03 am at Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn. Samuel is absolutely beautiful and very healthy. His big sister, Lexi, has been so excited and is desperate to help in any way. She runs around calling after Baby Samuel, as she calls him, or just “our baby.” The whole experience has just been wonderful so far.

My family is looking forward to the start of my parental leave. I can’t wait to be able to be home and spend that time with my family and help my wife to adjust. I cannot tell you what the efforts of PSC members, to win this great benefit and see it implemented, have meant to us all. Thank you all, from the heart.

Especially Moriah Berger, for their attention and support as I made arrangements for my leave.

Correction

The caption for the photograph “New PSC Executive Council takes office” on page 2 of our Summer issue identified George Brandon and Jonathan Buchsbaum as senior college officers. They are in fact university-wide officers.

Weberhin

PSC & Sept. 15 primary

Below are the PSC endorsements for NYC’S Sept. 15 primary election. A longer article on the union’s primary endorsements appeared on page 10 of the Summer Clarion (see www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm). Additional information — including all candidates’ responses to the union’s election questionnaire — is available at the PSC Political Action Committee website, www.psc-pac.org.

Stella support

I was very pleased to see the full-page article in the recent Clarion regarding the Stella D’oro union workers’ ongoing efforts to save their company in its historic home in the Bronx.

I have always supported PSC-CUNY’s outreach to and advocacy for other union struggles; it is a distinguishing feature of our current union leadership. I was also pleased to see Comptroller Bill Thompson Jr. weighing in with a practical plan to support our fellow unionists at the Stella D’oro Bakery by urging public pension funds invested with the Brynwood hedge fund that “owns” the bakery to divest its holdings until and unless the owners pull back on their unconscionable demands for profit at the expense of the workers.

Serema Nandi

Healthcare for all

PSC members were among the more than 3,000 people who rallied in Times Square on August 29 to show their support for health care reform. Participants called on the government to guarantee a system of universal health coverage that includes a public option for those who cannot obtain private insurance.

John Jay College (emerita)
Scope & severity of H1N1 outbreak uncertain

How to practice good hygiene for the coming flu season: With a resurgence of swine flu likely this fall and winter, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is urging people to wash their hands frequently and to use alternatives to handshakes. The CDC also recommends coughing or sneezing directly into a disposable tissue — or into one’s sleeve — not into the hand.

Rapid response?

CUNY reports that it is in regular contact with the New York City Department of Health and will follow directives from State and local health officials. “The University has updated its pandemic influenza response plan,” said the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Management Council’s Infectious Disease Committee with developing protocols,” an August 27 CUNY release, which described campuses as “circulating informational posters” of the plan.

CUNY’s flu plan outlines major areas of concern and administrative responsibilities. Beyond that, the documents is relatively general, leaving detailed planning to individual colleges or departments.

The problem, PSC health and safety activist Fred Kuechler, a Hunter College professor, said it has taken to improve campus hygiene and cleanliness, including more frequent cleaning schedules for high-touch surfaces.

CDC guidelines are only being partially followed.

When Clarion asked if colleges had been urged to present swine flu information at orientation or when classes met for the first time, CUNY spokesperson Michael Arena cited the University’s August 27 press release, which described campuses “circulating informational posters” over the summer.

The agency encouraged such education at orientation and other events at the start of the academic year.

Vulnerable

When Clarion asked if colleges had been urged to present swine flu information at orientation or when classes met for the first time, CUNY spokesperson Michael Arena cited the University’s August 27 press release, which described campuses “circulating informational posters” over the summer.

College-level officials indicated that they are in the process of drawing up plans for education efforts later in the semester. RMCC spokesperson Rachel Sokol told Clarion that the school’s vice president for administration and planning had met with the head of campus health services on August 31 and that college officials “are in discussion about the best way to proceed.”

“Everyone on campus will be covered in terms of getting information,” said the college’s health services director, Penelope Jordan.

“Information about the prevention and management of H1N1 will be addressed, along with information about the ‘regular’ flu, as part of the BC Health Clinic’s educational outreach efforts during this coming semester,” said Elene Tannenbaum, director of the Brooklyn College Health Clinic.

CDC spokesperson Tom Skinner told Clarion that most flu cases were spread by airborne transmission, which underscores the importance of good respiratory etiquette. The CDC recommends coughing or sneezing into a disposable tissue — or, if a tissue is not available, coughing or sneezing into one’s sleeve, not the hand.

The agency also emphasizes hand hygiene as a critical second line of defense. In addition to frequent hand-washing and alternatives to handshakes (see photo), the agency details “high-touch surfaces” that should be cleaned more frequently.

On cleaning and maintenance, CUNY’s August statement said that the University had emphasized keeping soap dispensers well stocked over the summer. Greenbaum noted that fall semester brings a larger number of both students and employees back to campus and said that in the first few days of the semester she had already begun to receive reports of problems. “We are getting calls from the campuses about lack of hot water and soap in bathrooms,” she said. “Is CUNY really ready for this?”

The union and CUNY administration met on flu-related issues over the summer, and on August 24, a letter from PSC Executive Director Deborah Bell asked the administration to make public the actions it has taken to improve campus hygiene and cleanliness, including more frequent cleaning schedules for high-touch surfaces.

The PSC asked CUNY if it will modify sick leave policies to discourage spread of the flu and if colleges will encourage employees to be sure to stay at home when they feel ill. The union urged the administration to consider advancing sick leave if an employee would otherwise be forced to go off pay roll. Finally, if campuses are closed or classes are cancelled, the union urged that employees’ leave time not be charged.

Swine flu could put adjuncts in a bind as they can miss no more than 1/15th of their assigned days while teaching a course and are not allowed to accrue sick days from one semester to the next.

This highlights the vulnerability and fragility of adjuncts who rely on CUNY for their main source of income,” said Marcia Newfield, the union’s vice president for part-time personnel.

How to register, or if you want to be kept informed about other union events on this issue, e-mail watchdogs@pscmail.org.

RESOURCES

The CDC is also urging colleges to plan for greater use of online learning tools, so that students who are ill or whose campus may close can continue their education. Manfred Kuechler, a Hunter College professor who has chaired a University subcommittee on Blackboard issues, said the online courseware system could help instructors stay in touch with their students, give assignments or conduct quizzes.

“Blackboard would need to work reliably,” he cautioned, recalling the service disruptions that plagued CUNY last semester. Those problems began when a new version of the software proved unable to handle the huge number of users at a university as large as CUNY.

As college students returned to school in late August, outbreaks of dozens of cases of swine flu were being reported on campuses, including the University of Missouri, University of Kansas, Mississippi State University, Tulane and Texas Christian University.

flu forum on Sept. 30

On Wednesday, September 30, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm, the PSC and the Service Committee for Occupa-

tional Safety & Health (NYCOSH) will co-host a forum on H1N1 preparedness. For more information about the event, please contact the PSC Union Hall. Speakers from the NYC Department of Health, the Federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the City Office of Professional Licensure will be present to answer questions and share information on how to register, or if you want to be kept informed about other union events on this issue, e-mail watchdogs@pscmail.org.

Scope & severity of H1N1 outbreak uncertain

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Honduran teachers oppose military coup

By KRISTIN BRICKEr

When the Honduran military deposed the nation's democratically elected President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya this past June 28, teachers quickly mobilized all over Honduras in opposition to the coup.

The Federation of Teacher Organizations of Honduras (FOMH), the umbrella organization that unites six Honduran teacher's unions, declared a national strike on June 28 in protest of the coup. The FOMH has been a key player in the National Union of Teachers of Honduras. Middle School Teachers, a 20,000-member organization that is widely considered to be the most activist member organization that is widely considered to be the most activist.

The FOMH's National Committee mobilizing the grassroots

"Those who are old enough can then decide whether or not to join the resistance." Rosario Ávila, coordinator of the FOMH's National Committee.

CLERK PROSUMAH, was severely beaten by police around the same time. "The repression is increasing," Rosario Ávila, coordinator of the FOMH's National Committee for Prevention of HIV and AIDS, said at a rally in early August.

As the grassroots struggle for a return to democracy becomes more prolonged, the movement has begun to organize on a larger scale.

To keep the coup government from re-opening schools and using the newly restored education ministry to pro-coup propaganda, the FOMH sometimes calls upon striking teachers to hold classes for three days and spend the rest of the week “participating in actions of struggle and resistance.” This allows students and their parents “to hear ‘the other side of the story,’ which is their right,” says Mejía. "Those who are old enough can then decide whether or not to join the resistance."

Parents and students have stepped forward to support their teachers’ organized resistance. Mejía reports that at her school, the Jesus Aguilar Paz Institute, where her students' grades improved, parents who broke ranks and began to teach classes, students’ parents took over the building to stop them.

El Salvador International, an alliance of more than 400 teachers’ unions around the world, including the AFT, has urged support for Honduran teachers’ efforts to organize against the coup.

Searching for textbook alternatives

By KATHERINE SANTIAGO

Escalating textbook prices have sparked public discussion about new ways to get classroom texts into students’ hands. From textbook rental programs to “open access” electronic books, publishers and elected officials are looking at alternatives.

Textbook prices have climbed at twice the rate of inflation, and they can cost students more than $1,000 a year, according to government reports. These steep increases occurred even though most university faculty members make an effort to consider price when choosing books for classes.

The United States Department of Education estimates that students can view a text online or download a copy. Where students can view a text online or download a copy. Students who prefer not to carry heavy books can get subscriptions from the authors.

All not electronic texts are open-access. Some publishers are promoting “e-textbooks,” digital files of books sold commercially. Students who prefer not to carry heavy books can get subscriptions from sites like CourseSmart.com.

"While the legislation under consideration would provide more affordable textbooks for students – something many of us have championed – it also raises significant issues of intellectual property rights for faculty," said President Barbara Bowen in June.

When the book is out, the AFT will ask students to pay for a print copy of the work, and other programs are available only in electronic form.

Not all electronic texts are open-access. Some publishers are promoting “e-textbooks,” digital files of books sold commercially. Students who prefer not to carry heavy books can get subscriptions from sites like CourseSmart.com.

"The University recently awarded a contract to Citibank to issue stored-value debit cards on which Federal Pell Grant funds can be used for textbook purchases – but according to Joe Martínov of Man- Hattan Books, an independent book store near BMCC, for years CUNY students were given a voucher for these funds that could be redeemed only at CUNY campus bookstores. This practice restricted competi- tion, said Martínov, who claims that his store offers significantly lower prices.

LAW SUIT

The parent company of Manhattan Books, Encore College Bookstores, recently won a lawsuit against this practice, Martínov told Clarin and CUNY is now ending its voucher system.

The University is appealing the decision, said Arena. While he said he could not comment on an ongo- ing lawsuit, Arena did describe some changes in CUNY’s adminis- tration of financial aid.

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Mayor pitches CC fund plan

Proposal draws questions

Earlier this year Mayor Michael Bloomberg proposed to cut more than $31 million in cuts to City support for CUNY’s chronically underfunded community colleges. But on August 13, just 12 weeks before the Election Day, Bloomberg pledged to provide an additional $50 million in community college funding over the next four years.

For community college advocates who fought hard to defeat Bloomberg’s proposed cuts this spring, the mayor’s call for more investment in CUNY was a welcome gesture – but one that also raised some questions.

NEW INITIATIVES

“Almost every year we have had a problem with Bloomberg on community college budgets,” said Anne Friedman, PSC vice president for community colleges. “He plays the game of slash and cut, and we have to fight to get money restored and increased.” Still, she added, “any positive attention on community colleges is a good thing.”

Bloomberg’s plan would provide support to “very specific categories,” said Friedman. But PSC First Vice President Steve London noted that the proposed money would end after four years. “The fundamental need of community colleges is for more ongoing funding, which this proposal does not address,” he said.

The Bloomberg proposal also does not allocate any funds for more ongoing full-time faculty positions or for improving conditions of part-time faculty, who provide the majority of community college instruction.

“Bloomberg’s promise of four years of new funding is an important step in supporting the community colleges, but it does not go far enough and does not last long enough,” said Friedman.

PSC’s community college instruction.

“The Bloomberg proposal also does not allocate any funds for more ongoing full-time faculty positions or for improving conditions of part-time faculty, who provide the majority of community college instruction.”

“One solid foundation

Workers at the CUNY Research Foundation Central Office greet negotiation on the issue of increased funding, which the PSC has long championed, including more funds for student advising ($1 million) and for campus day care ($86 million). These would be positive steps, said Friedman. But PSC First Vice President Steve London noted that the proposed money would end after four years. “The fundamental need of community colleges is for more ongoing funding, which this proposal does not address,” he said.

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The Bloomberg proposal also does not allocate any funds for more ongoing full-time faculty positions or for improving conditions of part-time faculty, who provide the majority of community college instruction.
More than six years ago, CUNY college presidents called for a "re-vitalization of the University’s affirmative action programs. Specific efforts were needed in both recruitment and retention, the Council of Presidents noted, because "there are still pockets within the University" where "traditional minority group members are conspicuous by their absence." “This is a particularly timely initiative,” the policy statement continues. "Many are now experiencing turnover due to early retirements and have committed to replacing faculty who directly impact on the delivery of instruction to our students.”

Several years after the adoption of that policy, there are still many parts of CUNY where the racial and staff color “are conspicuous by their absence.” Affirmative action data from Fall 2007 highlights the halting pace of change — and shows that in some areas, the University has taken a step backwards. For example, in 1997 to 2007, the proportion of assistant professors who are black fell from 16.3% to 13.8%. The absolute number of black full professors may have gone up by about a third, to 260 — but the total number of assistant professors increased, growing by about two-thirds to 1,881, so that black faculty ended up as a smaller share of the total. In many ways, the University as a whole has shrunk or stagnated in recent years — between 1995 and 2006-2007, it reported nearly 40,000 full-time faculty and their combined proportion of the total number of new PhDs grew from 5.9% to 9.0%. (See US Department of Education figures at ti-nyurl.com/racePHD).

Felipe Pimentel, an assistant professor at Hostos, acknowledges that CUNY’s instructional staff is relatively diverse in comparison to many private universities. But the argument goes, Hostos needs its own yardstick: “Why? Because our students are more diverse than the students in private universities. But the University needs to change.”

"Because our students are more diverse than the students in private universities. But the University needs to change." A look at the racial composition of CUNY’s student body since the introduction of open admissions and arguments that the pace of diversification of the University’s faculty has not kept up with the reality that “CUNY is no longer the largely white university it was in the ’60s.”

A look at the racial composition of CUNY’s student body, as well as the University’s employment figures in context. In Fall 2007, CUNY undergraduate employment figures were 28.8% black, 27.4% Latino, 27.2% white, 16.4% Asian/Pacific Islander and 4.9% Native American.

As noted above, the proportion of black employees among all CUNY instructional staff increased by half a percentage point between 1997 and 2007. At this rate, it would take 240 years for the proportion of black employees in CUNY’s professional workforce to catch up with their presence in today’s student body. Similarly, Latinos would have to wait 100 years to close the gap, while for those from Asian/Pacific Islander backgrounds, it would take 27 years.

A closer look at the numbers follows below. While there was no room in this article for every relevant detail, the complete figures can be found in the University’s affirmative action reports and the tinyurl.com/cunyIAhiring. A detailed discussion of employment patterns for all minority groups was beyond the scope of this broad overview of race and color employment at CUNY.

FULL-TIME FACULTY

The proportion of CUNY’s assistant professors who are black fell in the years 1997 and 2007, from 16.5% to 13.8%. The figure for black associate professors also fell in this period, from 11.6% to 10.1%. (The absolute number for black associate professors was exactly the same in both years — 152 — even as the total number of assistant professors rose from 1,305 to 1,500.)

The percentage of black full professors increased a bit in this decade, rising from 7.2% to 7.8%. This slight positive growth happened even though their absolute numbers fell. From 160 to 143, while the total number of full professors at CUNY fell even more steeply, from 2,210 to 1,845. This small rise in the proportion of black professors may have been shaped more by who retired than by who was promoted; more information would be required to determine whether this is the case.

At the other end of the full-time faculty scale, the proportion of black lecturers has been on the decline, falling from 30.4% in 1997 to 26.9% a decade later. (Their absolute number rose from 210 to 246.)

Among Latino faculty, representation in the assistant professor title changed little in these 10 years, rising by half a percentage point to 8.9% in 2007. In the associate professor title there was slow progress, with the proportion of Latino faculty rising from 3.5% to 7.6% over the decade. The percentage of full professors who are Latino increased by about half a percentage point to 3.5% in 2007. It is a bit more, from 6.3% to 7.6%. Absolute numbers of all groups rose, as the total number of adjunct lecturers grew from 5,580 to 6,641.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

As described above, HEO-series titles include a higher proportion of white. The proportion of white adjunct lecturers remained stuck at around 17.0% between 1997 and 2007, while representation of Latinos in this title rose by about one percentage point to 9.1%. Asian/Pacific Islander representation among adjunct lecturers grew a bit more, from 6.3% to 8.7%. Absolute numbers of all groups rose, as the total number of adjunct lecturers grew from 5,580 to 6,641.

What's the picture at your college? You can find statistics on race and employment for most instructional staff job titles at your college for 1997, 2002 and 2007 at www.cuny.edu/administration/ohrm/reports-forms/aadsb.html.
A look at race & employment at CUNY

Title at CUNY; it rose from 6.4% in 2005 to 80.0% for full professors. In the full HEO series, the proportion of HEOs of color actually decreased since 1997. The proportion of full HEOs at CSI who are black fell from 13% to 4%. Asian/Pacific Islander representation in this title at CSI remained unchanged: zero in 1997, and zero 10 years later. Overall, CSI and Hunter have the lowest proportions of people of color in the full HEO title in all of CUNY. The number of Latino full professors at Queensborough Community College was strikingly low: from 1997 to 2002 to 2007 it dropped from two to one to zero. Although the number of full professors at the school also fell in these years, from 121 to 72, this remains a striking figure for a college in such a famously diverse borough. Percentages at Queensborough should be examined cautiously, since with a relatively small faculty, a small change in absolute numbers can create big swings in percentages. But in virtually every instructional job title, Queensborough falls below CUNY averages in its employment of people of color.

The challenge of racial diversity in employment at CUNY is closely bound up with the University’s mission. When City College opened its doors in 1849, it was with the stated goal of educating “the children of the whole people” – and while its original student body, entirely white and male, fell short of that goal, the University has changed dramatically. Today the University’s master-plan highlights “the statutory charge defined by the New York State Education Law, which is a diverse workforce that truly reflects the unique population that the University serves.”

In 2003 for example, CUNY’s Task Force on the Black Male Initiative (BMI) examined institutional obstacles to the recruitment, retention and graduation of black male students. Its Higher Education Working Group concluded that the University must “recruit more black male faculty and administrative personnel on campuses throughout CUNY.”

“...at the College of Staten Island, the proportion of black faculty was lowered because of faculty attrition, the percentage of black adjunct professors fell from 4% in 1997 to 2% in 2007. CSI is also the only college where the proportion of HEOs of color actually decreased since 1997. The proportion of full HEOs at CSI who are black fell from 13% to 4%. Asian/Pacific Islander representation in this title at CSI remained unchanged: zero in 1997, and zero 10 years later. Overall, CSI and Hunter have the lowest proportions of people of color in the full HEO title in all of CUNY. The number of Latino full professors at Queensborough Community College was strikingly low: from 1997 to 2002 to 2007 it dropped from two to one to zero. Although the number of full professors at the school also fell in these years, from 121 to 72, this remains a striking figure for a college in such a famously diverse borough. Percentages at Queensborough should be examined cautiously, since with a relatively small faculty, a small change in absolute numbers can create big swings in percentages. But in virtually every instructional job title, Queensborough falls below CUNY averages in its employment of people of color.

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“The goal should be to have a teaching series of the New York City high school, and the city itself,” commented Hank Williams, an adjunct lecturer at CCNY and a doctoral candidate in English. “The academic status of people of color in the nation’s history and location – is positioned to assemble an instructional staff that mirrors the urban population... The University must ‘recruit more black male faculty and administrative personnel on campuses throughout CUNY.’ ”

The academic staffing crisis that developed over the last generation of failed attempts to expand racial diversity in academic employment. On the heels of the Black Male Initiative of the 1960s and ’70s, tenure-track positions in US universities began to decline. Today CUNY has almost 5,000 faculty at full-time and part-time positions, compared to 1,939 faculty who were employed when the University was founded in 1776. The result is that just when people of color began to crack open long-closed doors in academic hiring, these doors were re-closed with a narrowing job market.

The chronic scarcity of resources at CUNY has certainly held back efforts to expand the racial diversity of the University’s instructional staff. “... that needs to be learned about the process is similarly important – not only on faculty hiring committees, but also in the University’s administrative staff. ‘People tend to call upon those that they know and use channels with which they are most familiar,’ Moy observed. ‘If the people handling human resources and handling outreach, etc., are not from these communities, not tuned in or connected to these communities, the effectiveness of our outreach will be limited no matter what good faith is exercised.’

In addition to allocating more resources to outside recruitment, some say that a smart strategy for CUNY would be more focus on developing home-grown talent instead of overreaching for outside candidates. “There have been and remain some very genuine efforts to diversify faculty,” commented Frank Deale, a former chancellor of the City University of New York and a doctoral candidate at CCNY, “and he acknowledges that competition with wealthier institutions is a real problem. ‘But we need to look at what are the resources here? CUNY really needs to start drawing from our base, drawing deeper from this vast untapped pool of talent that we have. If other institutions are not turning you out the people you need to be professors – well, we have both the Asian American candidates whom other schools may be looking for. ‘The goal should be to have a teaching series of the New York City high school, and the city itself,”

Joyce Moy, director of CUNY’s Asian American Research Institute, told Clarion that the composition of those involved in the hiring process is similarly important – not only on faculty hiring committees, but also in the University’s administrative staff. ‘People tend to call upon those that they know and use channels with which they are most familiar.’ Moy observed. ‘If the people handling human resources and handling outreach, etc., are not from these communities, not tuned in or connected to these communities, the effectiveness of their outreach will be limited no matter what good faith is exercised.’
How to read your paycheck

Translating CUNY’s secret code

REFERENCE # : This is in lieu of a social security number. Every employee has a unique reference number.

LEAVE BALANCE AS OF: Community college paystubs do not provide sick leave balances for members of CUNY instructional staff. There may be a date in the box for Leave balance as of, but PSC members will not see any information underneath this box.

PAY INFORMATION — DESCRIPTION, UNITS/HOURS, AMT EARNED PRIOR PERIOD, UNITS/HOURS, AMT EARNED THIS PERIOD:

For all PSC titles, pay for your normal pay period will have the notation REGULAR PAY. The notation MISC PAY indicates additional pay for workshops and other activities outside of the normal work week. Examples include Summer Chair pay, adjustments and reconciliations to pay, and lump sum annual leave payments made upon separation from the college.

If you are a teaching adjunct, a full-time faculty member, or a CLIP teacher at Hostos or KCC, your pay is based on the 10 workdays that fall within one pay period. One of the two UNITS/HOURS boxes will say 10.00 and the other will be blank. The AMT EARNED PRIOR PERIOD box will be blank and your total earnings for the pay period will be in the AMT EARNED THIS PERIOD box.

If you are an HO or CLT, your pay is based on the 70 regular work hours in one pay period. One of the two UNITS/HOURS boxes will say 70.00 and the other will be blank. The AMT EARNED PRIOR PERIOD box will be blank and your total earnings for the pay period will be in the AMT EARNED THIS PERIOD box. If there is overtime pay, it is listed separately.

If you are a non-teaching adjunct or a continuing education teacher (except for CLIP teachers at KCC and Hostos), your pay is based on the number of hours worked in a particular pay period. The amounts in the two UNITS/HOURS boxes will add up to the total amount of hours that you worked during the pay period. The amounts in the AMT EARNED PRIOR PERIOD and AMT EARNED THIS PERIOD boxes will add up to your total gross pay for the pay period.

DEDUCTIONS:

Tax deductions are listed in the middle of the stub. Non-tax deductions are at the bottom. Here are some common deduction codes:

PENSIONS: TRS 414H STD is for the Teachers Retirement System, and TIA 414H STD for the Optional Retirement Plan (TIAA-CREF, Guardian, or Met Life). If you are making arrears contributions, the code is ARR.

TAX DEFERRED ANNUITIES: TRS TDA, TIAA TDA or HRA TDA.

NEW YORK STATE DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLAN: NYS TDA

The GOAL AMOUNT OR TOTAL INSTALLMENT NO. box lists the total amount that the IRS allows you to contribute for the year to your TDA. The BALANCE DUE OR INSTALLMENT LEFT box lists how much more this year you may contribute.

HEALTH INSURANCE: There is a different code for each health insurance plan offered through the NYC Health Benefits Plan. Regardless of what plan you have, the health insurance code will appear twice on the stub. The second code may be slightly different from the first one.

The common codes are:

G-CBP: GHI HMO, GHI HM0, HIP, and EMP HMO. If you have GHI CBP or HIP without a rider, there will be no deduction. GHI CBP is the rider next to one health insurance plan offered to employees in the bargaining unit. The code for agency fee is PROST F C U. If you are not a PSC member, then you pay an agency fee, the same amount as union dues, to cover the union’s costs in representing all employees in the bargaining unit. The code for agency fee is PRO STD CFU. The code for PSC-CUNY WF. UNION DUES OR AGENCY FEES is for PSC members and is the code for union dues. PROST F C U. If you are not a PSC member, then you pay an agency fee, the same amount as union dues, to cover the union’s costs in representing all employees in the bargaining unit. The code for agency fee is PRO STD CFU. The code for PSC-CUNY WF.

NYS TDA.

TDA.

Commuter college paystubs may have many quirks.

Adjuncts: 30 days to act on wrong pay

By DANIA RAJENDRA

If you’re an adjunct who is not receiving the correct rate of pay, you have 30 working days from the beginning of the semester to alert your campus HR office. (If you discover the error later, you can still get it fixed – but you may not be able to collect full back pay.)

This semester CUNY is paying adjuncts a “blended rate,” which incorporates the usual negotiated raises that take effect October 20. The “blended rate” averages the old wage and the new one, so adjuncts receiving the same in all weeks of the semester.

If you think you’re not being paid at the correct rate, call the PSC office at (212) 354-1252 and ask to speak to an adjunct grievance counselor. Make sure you have your pay stub (part-time faculty should get their first checks in early September) and your letter of reappointment from May.

By ELLEN BALLEISEN

Translating CUNY’s secret code — for CUNY employees and their dependents.

Throughout the year at different locations, the PSC provides FREE workshops for members and their dependents. More info, contact Marcia Newfield at mnewfield@pscmail.org.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm / International Committee Meeting. For location and more information, contact Katie Bridestahl at rbruden@juno.com.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7: 2:00-4:30 pm / Workshop on H1N1/swine flu prevention and preparation. Co-hosted by PSC Health & Safety Committee and NYUHS. See page 3 for details & registration information.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2: 4:00 pm / “First Friday” part-time members, PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th fl. Note: Sept. meeting is cancelled. For more info contact Marcia Newfield at mnewfield@pscmail.org.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11: 8:00 am – 12:00 noon / Retirees Chapter: PSC President Barbara Bowen speaking on “The State of the Union” and Ed Olt, former director of NYC Central Labor Council, on “Labor and the Upcoming Elections.” At the PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 14, 21: 6:00-8:00 pm / PSC/CUNY Contract Education Workshops. Space is limited. To register, call (212) 354-1252 or e-mail amunoz@pscmail.org.
PENSIONS

Public & private

By ERIC LAUREN

The stock market meltdown has put public-sector pension plans in the crosshairs. The states of New York and New York City, for example, announced that they could no longer make their combined pension contributions to more than double over the next year, from $8.8 billion to $17 billion.

Predictably, conservative pundits have pounced on the news as evidence that public-worker pensions are “unaffordable.” They are again calling on state and local governments to slash benefits or even freeze traditional, defined benefit pension plans and replace them with 401(k)-type personal savings accounts. This attack is built on several layers of misrepresentation. First, public pensions fund their benefit payments over decades. Despite the slump in the market, most public pension funds have holdings better than 60% of required assets. For the few chronically underfunded plans, the level of benefits isn’t their main problem—it’s that the public employer hasn’t kept up with its required contributions.

“CONSERVATIVE” ACCOUNTING?

One reason is that during the recent stock market booms of the past 20-odd years, some state and local governments took “contributing holidays,” arguing that there was no need to put more cash into the plans. Some took this too far, saddling themselves with pension obligations and their misplaced faith in the market.

Still, the numbers for most public plans show that they are not in danger. Right-thinking tanks want to change how those numbers are calculated. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) says that public employees should abandon their traditional method of accounting for pension assets and liabilities. Instead of valuing their plans assets on a rolling average of gains and losses, they would have to adopt a method based on a snapshot of assets and liabilities at a single point in time. The effect would be to make public plans’ finances appear much more volatile than they really are. The information itself wouldn’t be more useful—it matters what funds the long-term performance, not the latest numbers during a stock market slump. But “market value of liability” (MVL) accounting is a useful tool if your objective is to make public funds look as financially secure as well.

CONSERVATIVE ACCOUNTING? For example, in 2006, the state of New York City, New York City University, and other public employers with pension underfunding were in a similar situation. Instead of contributing more money to their pension plans, they took “contribution holidays,” arguing that they were a “cost of living adjustment” or a “justifiable” one-time benefit for workers.

But the decline of manufacturing in the US has been toward increasing insecurity for private-sector workers. To reverse this trend, some broader measures will be required.

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But the decline of manufacturing in the US has been toward increasing insecurity for private-sector workers. To reverse this trend, some broader measures will be required.

No union is an island...

School for Social Research, has proposed Guaranteed Retirement Accounts (GRA) as a supplement to Social Security. Employers and employees would together contribute 5% of earnings to GRAs, which would be managed by the private sector and used to pay for retiree benefits.

Last year, both the Obama and McCain campaigns endorsed the Automatic IRA, under which workers not covered by a retirement plan would be automatically enrolled in a set of 401(k) accounts that could make automatic payroll deposits to IRAs. The idea made its way into Obama’s 2010 budget proposal. The New York Times recently proposed augmenting this structure by providing a guarantee if returns fell below a certain level.

SOMETHING NEW

These ideas are fundamentally different from former President Bush’s scheme for Social Security privatization because they would supplement Social Security, not replace it. Gilliarducci’s proposal in particular aims to provide a set of benefits that would not require each worker to become a financial expert. However, all these ideas are still based on personal accounts. Other plans have called for a new system of guaranteed pensions for private-sector workers that would be closer to the public pension system.

Whatever shape a reformed private-sector retirement system takes, “the goal is to have broad-based retirement security for all workers, regardless of whether they work in the public or the private sector,” says Almeida. This would be something new in US policy-making. Washington has never had an “official” concept of a private, pay-as-you-go retirement income for everybody. The current economic downturn, plus Washington’s obsession with deficit reduction, suggests that this would be difficult to achieve.

But if the nation really is coming close to enacting some form of universal, national health care system, perhaps it might also be ready to take the next programmatic step toward universal private-sector retirement security. If so, public-employee pensions can become a great deal more politically secure as well.

Eric Lauren writes frequently on labor and pension issues. He is co-author of Understanding the Crash, forthcoming from Soft Skull Press.

OPINION		9

September 2009

Correction

The Clarion • September 2009

© 2009 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY
Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) is proposing a system of federal grants to faculty whose textbooks are published or self-published on the aim of lowering the cost of textbooks through “open access” publishing. (See page 10.)

In late June PSC President Barbara Bowen wrote to all PSC members to ask for their input on Durbin’s proposal. “While the legislation under consideration would provide more affordable textbooks for students – something many of us have championed – it also raises significant issues of intellectual property rights for faculty,” she wrote. Union members’ “experience as textbook-writers, textbook-users and advocates for students” is essential to this discussion, Bowen said.

How will Durbin’s legislation be structured, and what level of control would it provide for textbook authors in the production process? Union members were asked to comment on the three types of licensing that have been under consideration by Sena- dor Durbin for his legislation:
1) BY license: Under this license the author is credited for the work, but does not retain control over changes or future use (either commercial or non-commercial) once the text is marketed online. The material in the textbook would be treated as open information, and anyone would be free to change or use it in any other form. This is the policy strongly favored by “open ac- cess” advocates.
2) BYNC-SA license: The abbreviation stands for “by attribution, non-commercial, share-alike.” Under this license the author retains the right to prevent future use of the work for profit, but has no control over updates and revisions as long as they are for non-commercial use. This approach has the support of some of the major student advocacy groups.
3) “No Derivative” license: Under this license the text cannot be changed, updated or used for any purpose – commercial or non-commercial – without the author’s express approval. This is the option least favored by “open access” advocates, but preferred by many faculty. The AFT’s legal staff is exploring proposals to solve one of the problems this approach presents: efficient administration of permission for derivative works. Below are selections from the more than 150 com- ments that union members sent in response:

IN an opinion piece, Open Access Publishing. At City Tech we spend many thousands of dollars each year buying textbooks to put on reserve in the library for students to use, to only see many go out of date as new editions (often very similar) are published a few years later. It would be wonderful to use those funds for scholarly books and journals that will be relevant for many years, not just a few. I also know that many of our students, es- pecially in the health sciences and technology majors, simply cannot afford to buy the textbooks for their courses.

There is no denying the utility of textbooks, for college courses but I do not believe that the current busi- ness model for textbook publishing serves anyone other than the pub- lishers. Most textbooks are textbooks and the textbook model could allow faculty to create their own customized textbooks from a variety of mod- ules, either modules they create themselves or modules created by other faculty within CUNY or at other institutions of higher education.

One possible model is Rice Uni- versity’s Connexions (cnx.org), an online database of educational modules. Connexions uses a ver- sion of the BY license, which allows for maximum flexibility of reuse for those materials in ways that are most appropriate for different courses at different institutions.

MAYA MALVE Assistant Professor & Information Literacy Librarian City Tech

My scholarship focuses on infor- mation policy, especially copy- right, and I am a vocal advocate for Exceptions and Limitations to the Copyright. My work is in academic work. Academic au- thors reap a very small portion of the profits that result from most of their work, yet textbooks are written for motives other than the promise of royalties.

I am already a heavy user of CC- licensed readings in my courses. Student response has been enthusi-astically and unanimously positive. Students who cannot afford to pur- chase the bound copies of assigned books are grateful to save the mon- ey, and even those who purchase print copies are excited to have a digital copy on their laptop or other portable device; these digital “sec- ond copy” copies are easier to search, travel with, and quote from.

Assigning CC-licensed writings is relatively easy for me, because information policy scholars are at the cutting edge of CC adoption; there are many such works that are appropriate for my courses. Few professors are so lucky today, but I hope this bill will become law and encourage similar options for instructors across the academy.

A BYNC-SA license is the most common CC license for academic works, and its terms work quite well. Students and instructors are confident that their regular class- room uses are permitted, and au- thors can rest assured that they will receive proper attribution and that nobody can make a profit with- out the author’s permission.

BILLY HERNAN Asst. Professor of Media Studies Hunter College

I am the author of six books, mostly textbooks, with a seventh nearing completion. All have been published in the traditional way with major publishers (McGraw- Hill, John Wiley, Prentice-Hall, Cambridge). Publishers contribute a great deal of added value to tech- nical books, and I am very wary of self-publishing in an electronic format. That being said, the only format that I would even consider for my three proposed is #3, a so-called “derivative” license. I put considerable effort into the planning and writ- ing of a text, which occupies a substan- tial amount of my own time and many years, and I would not let someone else alter it without my express agreement. Incidentally, it is my practice to make PDF files of my texts available to students at my own institution at no cost when they are used for course textbooks.

MORTON DENN Albert Einstein Professor, Chemical Engineering & Physics City College

I have published three editions of a textbook that is used to teach writing pedagogy in graduate schools across the country. I also have an older textbook that is used to teach literature classes to undergraduate students in literature classes. I do not have experience with open access publish- ing and I received a flat fee for all my textbook work which means that I do not earn royalties.

That said, I am very much in fa- vor of Option #2. Just so long as I re- ceive an attribution for my work, I am happy to make my textbooks avail- able for purposes of non-commercial sharing and revision. Excerpts of the writing pedagogy textbook are already available on Google Books, which seems to serve some of the same purposes as Option #2.

SUZANNE CHARLESKEINSTEIN Assistant Professor of English LaGuardia Community College

Proposals #1 and #2 would be disastrous for teachers and stu- dents alike. They...interfere with academic freedom, interfere with students’ ability to do accurate re- search, encourage plagiarism, down- play the value of books and original scholarship, and create additional standards still exist, and discrimi- nate against faculty. Text books will become the new Wikipedia. ...Textbooks online are a terrible idea, no matter how popular. Stu- dents have enough trouble learn- ing how to do research using real books and original sources without cluttering the process by introduc- ing the web – which is often, if not usually, inaccurate. ...Messing around with an au- thor’s material feeds into the ten- dency for many librarians to treat the web as the “Virtual Reality” state in which many students live. Life, television not- withstanding, is not virtual. There are boundaries in the real world, boundaries of time and place, that have been seriously compromised by the web. Many students have no sense of history, and this negatively affects their ability to learn – a situ- ation that in large part has been fos- tered by the web. 

LAURIE ADAMS Professor of Art History John Jay

While I find the first two op- tions attractive in their own ways, I cannot really think of any form other than the “Free and Open Source” movement that’s the best model for this. Au- thors should have various options, a choice of licenses, not a “one-size constrains most” approach.

1) The BY License: This is the best model if you have non-profit constraints, but it doesn’t work for academics with particularly well-established positions, who wouldn’t want lesser income, and who would be most interested in clarity of expression. Should they be denied government support even if they are willing to forgo per- sonal income and make their work freely available to others?

2) BYNC-SA: Everyone loses here, as the writer gets no money, nor does anyone else. Why not allow the option to incorporate it as a public good into commercial prod- ucts? Don’t the government and the polity potentially stand to ben- efit from the possibility of commer- cial investment making additional, perhaps highly profitable, use of the com- mercial use option, BUT with strings attached, including making the original available freely and providing full original attribution.

3) “No Derivative” works? Don’t the government and the polity potentially stand to ben- efit from the possibility of commer- cial investment making additional, perhaps highly profitable, use of the com- mercial use option, BUT with strings attached, including making the original available freely and providing full original attribution.

JAY PAUL GATES Assistant Professor of English John Jay

I came to CUNY after a long back- ground in the computer industry, and the “Free and Open Source” software move- ment is the best model for this. Au- thors should have various options, a choice of licenses, not a “one-size constrains most” approach.

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T he issue of online publishing is certainly fraught. Many re- search universities are attempting to keep dissertations from being published/made accessible online and would rather have them not to. It is al- ready there and available, no press will want to pick up the revised book version. This poses seri- ous problems for the promotion of scholars.

Open access publishing will tend not to be counted by many of our organizations and will not be entered as tenure-promotion-worthy publica- tion. We are responsible for publish- ing with academic, or at least recognized professional presses, and these presses have no interest in publishing open access material. Even though university presses do not tend to make a great deal of money (if any) on scholarly texts, the market is clearly still there and will continue to be there.

DAVE BRIANT Graduate Assistant in Psychology City College
Laurent Cantet’s film The Class is an emotionally powerful, socially penetrating work that raises trenchant questions about the nature of teaching in public schools. It follows a trying year in the life of a French schoolteacher working in a tough, multicultural middle school near Belleville.

The Class, based on a best-selling autobiographical novel (Entre les murs) by François Bégaudeau (a teacher of French of 10 years standing), who plays the main character, Bégaudeau (a teacher of French of 10 years standing), comes up to him after the last class session and poignantly says that she feels misunderstood: “I have nothing to learn that cause them to act out and are hard to resolve.

François is an imperfect, flawed teacher, but Cantet does not look for villains in the classroom. They complain about the names he uses in sample sentences (why, they demand, are Bo and Bob, malevolent, and all have their strengths as well as their weaknesses. They are just adolescents who deal with profound cultural conflicts that cause them to act out and are hard to resolve.

BALANCE

Cantet has made, arguably, the best film about the dynamics of the classroom that we have ever seen, and one that is also true to the relations between teacher and student. It raises larger questions about how one teaches students from a variety of cultures, insisting there is a common body of knowledge that must be learned, without, at the same time, being insensitive to the class and cultural values that students carry with them when they enter the door. The Class is always aware that to achieve that delicate balance is a difficult feat.
Health care reform fight

The outcome of the battle over health care will affect coverage for many Americans — and momentum for political change for years to come. Go to the AFT’s website www.unionvoice.org/reform to send a letter urging Congress to act. You can edit the letter if you wish to stress the importance of a public option — or voice support for a single-payer plan, the choice of 59% of Americans. (Both are supported by the PSC.) Seventy-eight progressive House members have said a strong public option is a requirement for real reform. Go to the websites of Metro Health Care Alliance (metrohealthcare.org/index.html) or NYC for Change (www.nycforchange.org) to learn how you can get involved.

Three new directions

By BARBARA BOWEN
PSC President

A sk anyone on the CUNY fac-
ulty or staff about their work-
load, and you’ll get a similar re-
sponse. “It’s impossible to give students the attention they deserve when my classes are so over-
crowded.” “The demand for publications for promotion keeps rising, but with my teaching load, serious research is out of the ques-
tion.” “The college president keeps adding new initiatives and claiming credit for all kinds of successes, but the truth is that fac-
ulty and staff are being required to spend endless hours in make-work committees.” “As an adjunct teaching three courses, I get paid for one office hour a week, but I spend many more hours — for which I am completely unpaid — meeting individually with students.” “Registration is counselors’ busiest time, and it used to occur twice a year, now it’s virtually year round.”

The hidden cost of the chronic under-
funding of CUNY is an unmanageable
workload for the faculty and staff. As
CUNY crams more and more students into the University, partly in an attempt to re-
coup in tuition income what has been lost in public funds, we are expected to do more — for more — with less. We are experiencing what industrial workers call “speed-up.” And what speed-up at CUNY puts at risk, the union is finding, is the quality of our students’ education. You simply cannot give 40 students in a class the same level of indi-
vidual attention you once gave to 25.

Tackling the connection between workload and educational quality was the motivation for the PSC’s project on workload, one of three new directions taken by the union last year. So far, the project has involved a series of focus groups with members to discuss workload and design of a University-wide survey, to be circulated in the spring. The issue is clear: if we are serious about protecting the quality of education at CUNY — not to mention the quality of our own lives — we need to ad-
dress workload. A survey that offers the first comprehen-
sive data on the subject will be a powerful first step; the next step will be to de-
velop strategies for change.

WORKLOAD

The workload initiative comes out of a commitment the union leadership made last September when we took a hard look at the po-
litical landscape and made a plan. The PSC had just fin-
ished negotiating a strong contract, and we knew that the growing economic crisis would dominate the coming year. Enforcement of the contract and prepa-
ration for the next round of bargaining are al-
ways at the forefront of our agenda, and this year the economy is likely to loom even larger as we brace for a major budget crisis for New York State. But we also saw an op-
portunity to embark on projects for structural-
al change at CUNY; initiatives in line with our belief that “another university is pos-
sible.” The three new projects that emerged, including the one on workload, hold out promise for building on some of the deep struc-
tures of the University. A second aims to sta-
bilize a faculty workforce composed of more than half contingent employees, and a third takes on CUNY and race.

STABILIZING THE FACULTY WORKFORCE

If excessive workload is the hidden cost of underfunding at CUNY, the unmistakable cost is the replacement of a full-time, ten-
ured faculty with underpaid part-timers. In the mid-1970s, when enrollment was about as high as it is today, CUNY had nearly
5,000 more full-time faculty. CUNY manage-
ment’s ill-conceived response to years of budget-cutting was to save money on the University’s core work — teaching — by un-
derpaying a huge number of its faculty. In the Spring 2009 semester, CUNY’s faculty
was 7,047 full-time and 8,794 part-time. You wouldn’t know it from looking at the CUNY ads on the subway, but the truth is that the majority of CUNY faculty are part-timers. And none of the nearly 9,000 teaching ad-
juncts has a guarantee that they will have a job from one year to the next.

That means that thousands of our students also have no guarantee that their instructor will be available after the end of the semester to write a recommendation, offer advice on career choices or serve as a role model and mentor. It means that many academic depart-
ments have to go through a time-consuming hiring or re-hiring process every semester. And it means that thousands of adjuncts can-
not make a commitment to full participation in the life of the University because they are not paid to do so and never know when their time at CUNY will end.

The initiative on stabilizing the faculty workforce seeks, in a modest way, to ad-
dress the issue of contingency for the faculty. The problem is complex, involving questions of selection and evaluation of ad-
juncts as well as the needs of departments for some flexibility in course assignments. But I am convinced that a better practice can be developed, one that offers stability to departments, dignity to the adjunct faculty who have kept the University aloft in tough times, and continuity of instruction to our students. Working on a small number of campus, PSC activists are beginning to discuss what that practice might be, and the results of their work could have ramifica-
tions throughout CUNY and beyond.

CUNY AND RACE

The third initiative is in some ways the most far-reaching, raising an issue that has been at the heart of debate about CUNY almost since the University’s founding in 1848. The Executive Council has convened an advisory group on CUNY and Race, drawing on expertise on the subject among scholars and activists at the University. The project has a double focus: to investigate the impact of racism and racial inequality within the University and without — as a possible fac-
tor in the history of public funding for CUNY. Is there a connection between the sharp decline in CUNY funding after the mid-1970s and the dramatic shift in CUNY’s student population following the introduction of open admissions in 1970? What are the patterns of hiring, retention and promotion for faculty and staff of color at CUNY? Should CUNY hold itself to a higher standard than mere compliance with affirmative action laws?

These are some of the questions posed in the first stage of the project, which will concentrate initially on patterns of hiring and promotion at CUNY (for an overview of those patterns, see pages 6 and 7). We seek to discover the stories behind the statistics and to explore what it would mean — intel-
lectually, pedagogically, politically — to aim for a faculty and staff that reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of our students. Many of us who work at CUNY chose to come here because of a dream that an antiracist univer-
sity was possible; in a small way, the union’s project on CUNY and race pays homage to that dream.

These three initiatives — workload, stabil-
ity of the faculty workforce and race — have deep roots; although they are focused on measurable changes in the workplace, they all arise from a willingness to reimagine the University. Our chance of success will be greatest if both the work and the aspira-
tion are shared.

Another university is possible.