New savings plan offered

All CUNY employees, both full- and part-time, now have a new retirement savings option. The 457 Plan, sponsored by New York State, is flexible and tax-deferred.  

Pension equity

PSC wins labor board decision

The NLRB ruled that grad students who work for the Research Foundation do have union rights – and their May 2005 ballots must be counted.

Pension equity

NYS lawmakers OK reform bill

PSC members urge Gov. Spitzer to sign legislation that would give TIAA-CREF participants the same treatment as their co-workers in TRS.

History

The fight against the slave trade

CUNY students and NYC union members joined British unionists’ commemoration of the ban on the slave trade, and discussed its meaning for today.
Call for submissions
Our CUNY vs. Their CUNY

Can you imagine?

The PSC is in the midst of negotiations with CUNY management for a new contract, and both sides have presented their demands. If you look at each side’s list, say union activists—and you can find both on the web at www.psc-cuny.org/NewCon-
tractRound.htm, you’ll see two very different visions for the University’s future.

“It’s one thing to describe the potential impact of these demands, if they make their way into the contract, in the prosaic language of newsletters and speeches,” said a statement from the PSC Organizing Committee. “But many of our members—artists, musicians, poets, fiction writers and performers—can present the possible future under these demands more vividly, whether that presentation is tragic or comic.”

As part of an educational campaign about this round of bargaining, the committee is inviting union members “to contribute a piece of creative work that illustrates what life would really be like at CUNY under management’s demands, or under the PSC’s demands,” to be considered for presentation at an event at the union hall on 6/1. The event is planned for September 15, 2007, the day the contract current expires. “Send us your dystopian, utopian, or simply humorous version of CUNY’s future were these demands to go into effect,” the committee requested in a postcard sent to members the last week in July.

Submissions should be sent to Dorothee Benz at dbenz@pscmail.org. They will be considered and a list of contributors will be posted in the upcoming Newsletter.

We hope you will contribute a piece and can’t wait to see your work. We’ll be back in touch in the Fall and look forward to hearing about your creative visions of the future.

As described in the May-June Clarion, the names of all those elected to chapter office are being published in this Summer issue (see page 5). As in the past, we print the name of each person and the office to which they were elected; as in the past, the names of those new to their positions are indicated.

Chapter election coverage

In the May-June Clarion the headline on page 8 reads, “Incumbents win chapter races.” At QCC a fusion ticket of CUNY Alliance and New Caucus supporters called the QCC Unified Slate was elected with new chapter chair, Dr. Paul Weiss. The QCC chapter therefore does not fit under the heading of our students, whose needs are surely no less than those of the Honors College’s “University Scholars.”

Jonathan Buchbaum
Queens College

Against Hillary Clinton

I see that Hillary Clinton may get the nod from the AFT. I strongly oppose this, for many reasons: she does not represent our members, our students, our CUNY or our city. Consider her failure to act positively toward labor issues while on the board of Wal-Mart; and her awful record on the Iraq war.

Even if the AFT board does vote to endorse Clinton, that need not be a unanimous recommendation—a principled abstention, or even a “no” vote, would send a strong signal. I remember our union’s mistaken endorsement of McCafe for New York governor over our own Stanley Aronowitz, which might have truly had a positive outcome—enhancement of alternate/third party politics in our 1.5 party state. We are protesting in front of her office—we don’t intend to support her in the proverbial smoky rooms, do we?

Paul Sheridan
Brooklyn College (retired)

Letter to the Editor

Equal problems, unequal resources

At the end of last semester, a student informed me that her father had entered the hospital and she would like to re-schedule the final. I told her not to worry and to contact me when his condition improved.

Shortly afterward, I received a note from an administrator asking me to arrange an alternative time for “this Honors College student” to take the final.

This was the first time I had ever received such a request. As we know, Honors College students are given more than particular seminars or classes—they get free tuition and a portable computer. Evidently, they also receive counseling support that extends to the intervention of administrators with teachers.

CUNY’s website states that the Honors College aims to develop students’ awareness of the resources available to them as members of the Honors College.

Yet one of the first things the other hundreds of thousands of CUNY students become aware of is CUNY’s lack of resources, including counselors.

As the Honors College is heavily supported by private funds, the University risks reproducing a two-tier private/public system within CUNY itself. If access is to remain the mission of CUNY, we should seek access to the best support practices for all of JK. Walters
Lehman College

Labor in Brief

Bill to restore union rights of professionals

In March, federal lawmakers introduced bills to turn over the National Labor Relations Board’s Kentucky River decision. That ruling redefined and radically expanded the board’s definition of “supervisor” — which removed thousands of workers from the protection of federal law if they seek to form a union.

Three Democrats in the Senate and two in the House introduced the Re-Empowerment of Skilled and Professional Employees and Construction Tradeworkers (REE-SPRECT) Act. The bill would amend the National Labor Relations Act by redefining “supervisor” as a worker who spends the majority of her or his day supervising others.

Faculty strike votes lead to contract gains

In early July, the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties reached an agreement with the state university system, after the academic union voted to authorize a strike.

“Your mantra has been no contract, no work,” union President Patricia Heilman told the Chronicle of Higher Education. In previous years, she said, unionized faculty had worked past the contract expiration date. “Each time we did that, it ended in a bad result. So we decided we will try something else.”

In California, faculty in the state college system won salary increases of 3% to 5% over four years, after 94% of members authorized a walkout—the first strike vote in the union’s history. A mediator’s report was the basis for the settlement, reached in April.

NEWS & LETTERS

Clarion | Summer 2007
Legislature OKs pension equity bill

By PETER HOGNESS

On June 21, the New York Legislature passed a pension equity bill that has been one of the PSC’s top priorities for the last seven years. The bill now awaits Gov. Spitzer’s signature.

“We need one last push from members to get this bill signed,” said Steve London, PSC first vice president and legislative representative. “We have put together a broad coalition of support and now the governor needs to hear that this is something the members want.” (See page 9)

CONTRIBUTIONS

The legislation provides that CUNY employees in the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP), which includes TIAA-CREF and similar plans, who have 10 or more years of service would have the State or City pick up the contribution members are currently making to their pension plan. For most participants, this will mean a savings of 3% of their annual pay.

When Albany approved a similar change for TRS members in 2000, employees in TIAA-CREF and other plans were left out. “It’s an equity issue,” said former PSC Secretary Celia McCall, who coordinated the

Fairness for those in TIAA-CREF

union’s grassroots lobbying push to win legislative approval. “This is a benefit that people in TRS have had for several years, and people in TIAA-CREF should not get different treatment.”

Pedro Irgoyen, Chief College Lab Technician in the chemistry department at Queensborough Community College, said his representative, State Senator Serf Maltese to urge support for the bill. Irgoyen has worked at CUNY for 25 years. “It’s a matter of fairness,” he told Clarion. “What’s done for others should be done for all.” He said he would use the savings to put aside more for his retirement. “I’m about 10 years away from retiring, and this would help quite a bit.”

At one time most PSC members were in TRS, which is a traditional defined-benefit pension system. Today, most choose to join CUNY’s ORP, a defined-contribution system.

“When the ORP was created, the Legislature was explicit about its intent to ensure equitable treatment of all public retirement systems,” said London. “This reform puts that intent into practice.”

If signed into law, the bill would be phased in over a three-year period, with the employer picking up a 1% additional contribution in each year.

“When we came into office in 2000, we found that a deal had been cut on pensions as part of that year’s round of collective bargaining, which gave this benefit to TRS participants,” London told Clarion. “But the ORP was left out. We immediately went to work to provide education services to returning veterans. "Thirty-five years later, "The mayor and chancellor, "I felt gratified that almost every member we called already knew about this issue,” said McCoy. “They knew we had been trying to get it for a while and they were grateful that we called. So the word is out there, and members appreciated having a chance to act on the outcome.”

Members’ phone calls made the difference: all four State Senators targeted by the PSC supported the bill, and their backing helped secure approval by the Senate’s Republican majority.

McCull noted that the CUNY ad- ministration also threw its support behind the legislation. “They told legislators that this is a tool for recruitment,” she explained.

As Clarsines went to press, union members were again being asked to make their voices heard — this time to contact the governor.

The bill will be directly delivered to Gov. Spitzer in early August, and he will have 10 days in which to take action.

PETER Jonas, chair of the PSC Pension Committee, urged union members to take action. “Last year we achieved a legislative victory, but saw the bill torpedoed by then-Gov- ernor Pataki,” Jonas told Clarion. “This year, we — PSC members — must let Governor Spitzer know that he needs to step up and sign this legislation.”

(See page 12 for information on how you can take action.)

City increases funding for CUNY

City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and Mayor Michael Bloomberg announced an agreement on a $30 billion budget for New York City on June 13. Newspapers celebrated the early achievement on the spending plan for fiscal 2008 – the budget often doesn’t get done until hours before the June 30 deadline.

The early agreement also brought some good news for CUNY funding. The City Council reversed $42 million of the mayor’s cuts and added $31.1 million to CUNY’s funding, for a total budget of $842.5 million. The budget provides for two new programs – the ASAP Initiative, which aims to support community college students in gaining their associate’s degrees, and a new veterans’ center based at LaGuardia. The Council also increased the allocations for CUNY’s capital budget, so that CUNY can receive all matching funds available from the State.

The PSC had pushed hard for the restorations. “Our members’ ac- 

“While Bloomberg had sought $82.5 million in cuts to CUNY’s community colleges in his executive budget, he nevertheless proposed a new program to increase student re- 

“We have made up much of the lost ground,” said Farrell.

Council reverses mayor’s cuts

tivism paid off,” said first Vice Pres- ident Steve London. “The Council heard us and we are very pleased at the advances made in this year’s budget.” Overall, London noted, City support for senior and commu- nity college programs was up by a total of 13.3% over last year. PSC members helped produce that result by signing some 13,000 postcards to the budget, holding CUNY Week events with legislators on campus- es, and turning out for a May 9 lob- by day at City Hall.

MEMBERS

“When adjusted for inflation, at the City level we have almost recov- ered from the devastating de-fund- ing of the 1990s,” London said. “While we are still 12% behind 1991 in real dollars in City support for CUNY, we have made up much of the lost ground.”

But London noted that many press- ing problems at CUNY remain to be 

“most of the lost ground”, of the 1990s.

solved. From CUNY’s shortage of psy- chological counseling to an excessive reliance on part-time faculty. “We look forward to making real progress in the years to come,” he said. Much of the budget restorations and enhancements will cov- er increases to costs such as energy, the University’s salaries and benefits. A large portion goes to City Council- sponsored student aid pro- grams, such as the Pell Scholarships and the need- based Safety Net program. CUNY’s Black Male Empowerment Initiative received restorations and a $1 million enhancement to expand its work.

While Bloomberg had sought $82.5 million in cuts to CUNY’s community colleges in his executive budget, he nevertheless proposed a new program to increase student re- 

“program.” The City allocated $65 million to the Accelerated Study Associate Programs, known as AS- AP. The program seeks to provide extra student support — additional fi- nancial aid, more convenient sched- uling for working students, tutors, and a summer program for prepara- tory or remedial work. ASAP stu- dents will be grouped in cohorts of 25 or fewer stu- 

“We have made up much of the lost ground,” said Farrell.

The mayor and chancellor focusing attention on the community colleges is “good,” said PSC Vice Pres- ident for Community Col- leges Anne Friedman. “But more counseling, smaller classes and more financial help should be a reg- ular part of CUNY’s community col- lege budget, not only a special program.”

The City also allocated $1 million for a new Veterans Resource Cen- ter at LaGuardia. “Our vets’ pro- gram was created in January 1972 to provide education services to re- 

turning Vietnam combat veterans,” said Samuel Farrell, who directs the veterans’ programs at La- Guardia. “Thirty-five years later, we find ourselves in the same posi- tion. CUNY is still a place for returning soldiers to develop the skills they need to compete in the job market.” Farrell said the La- Guardia-based program will serve as a CUNY-wide model as the pro- gramming is developed.

In addition to those two programs, the City Council restored 680,000 for the CUNY Citizenship and Immigra- tion Project, and $1.6 million for the Dominican Studies Institute, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies and the Immigration Center.

MENTAL HEALTH

The Council did not fund a PSC proposal for hiring additional faculty counselors to address a long-stand- ing shortfall in mental health ser- vices they need for CUNY students. The recent tragedy at Virginia Tech highlights the importance of action on this problem, PSC President Bar- bara Bowen told Clarion, and the union is committed to pursuing the issue in next year’s budget. “We are going to continue to alert State and City lawmakers to this pressing need,” she said.
Deborah Glick, CUNY alumna, is new Assembly higher ed chair

By DANIA RAJENDRA

"I began my college career when CUNY had a policy of free tuition, so I did not face the prospect of coming out of my undergraduate years with a lot of debt," recalled Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, a Queens College graduate.

Perhaps more importantly, the absence of tuition helped her decide to pursue a better education. "There was more time to study, more time to be involved politically," she told Clarion this spring. Glick's own political involvement began as an undergraduate, and it put her on a path that led to the New York Legislature.

"Today, the exploration of ideas and finding your way through a variety of bodies has to be purchased, and it is exorbitantly priced by the cost of school and the demand to move forward" to a specific job. "So critical thinking and knowledge for knowledge's sake have suffered throughout higher education."

COMMISSION

Glick has represented the 66th Assembly District in Greenwich Village since 1990, when she became an undergraduate, and "grew up involved politically," she told Clarion the majority of experiences to the New York Assembly. She explained.

Becoming an active feminist was also sparked, in part, by her own experience with discrimination in class. "As a woman, I was actively discouraged from science," she explained. "It was during the tumultuous Vietnam War days that it was very exciting."

It was also prior to Roe v. Wade, and she became involved in the struggle to legalize abortion. "By the time I was in college experience was very rich," she said.

She also learned a lot outside of class. "I was very involved in political activism," she explained. "I was interested in chemistry.

She contrasted her pre-college experience with discrimination in class. "As a woman, I was actively discouraged from science" – a common experience in the 1960s, she said.

"I was interested in chemistry, and calculus, and I was having some trouble with the math. I definitely didn't get the kind of support in math and science that would have led me to pursue [chemistry as a career]." Glick pursued a theater major until she "took a hiatus."

Given that students often need more than two or four years to finish their degrees, Glick said it is time to re-examine the TAP program. "We have to rethink and massage the TAP program so that it is more reflective of the way students go through school now. It's of great concern and interest to me." Under TAP's current rules, students who are financially self-supporting are at a disadvantage. More broadly, Glick is concerned that rising costs have made higher education much less accessible. "Bottom line, we've seen dramatic increases in the cost of public higher education, and I haven't seen the same dramatic increase in working people's incomes."

TERRIFIC AD

Glick praised the PSC's efforts to change the funding equation. She said the union's TV ad on this year's budget battle was "terrific," and its lobbying efforts got noticed. "The
NLRB rules for RF workers

By DANIA RAJENDRA

On June 28, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) told CUNY’s Research Foundation (RF) that the CUNY graduate students are, in fact, workers—who do have the right to unionize.

The ruling cleared the way for counting ballots that Research Foundation employees cast in a Graduate Center union election in May 2005. But on July 14, almost as soon as that count began, it ground to a halt due to objections from RF management. PSC representatives sought a compromise that it is a complete separate employer from CUNY— and private-sector where CUNY’s Graduate— it contended that most of its Graduate Center employees had no right to organize because they were also CUNY graduate students.

The NLRB rejected that argument:
“Unlike Brown, the employer [the Research Foundation] is not an educational institution.”

Rob Sauté, a doctoral student in sociology at the Graduate Center, agreed. “The RF doesn’t grant degrees. Although they probably would be highly qualified to confer degrees in union-busting, delaying and dagging,” he joked. Sauté faults the RF for the repeated holdups. “Clearly the RF has every advantage in delaying,” he said. “It means the union has to keep starting over.” Since many RF employees work on specific research projects, he explained, turnover is high: “Many work on projects that last one or two years. Mine was four.” But his project is over now— so Sauté, who was actively involved, is no longer an RF employee.

VOICE
Sauté predicted that the RF’s latest objections would not prevent a union victory. “It’s a last-ditch effort to deny people a voice,” he said. The PSC wants the ballots to be counted, in full, without further delay. “We will work hard to move the vote through the board’s procedure as quickly as possible,” said PSC Executive Director Deborah Bell. “But this is one more example of why card-check recognition and congressional passage of the Employee Free Choice Act is so important. Current procedures are too vulnerable to stalling tactics by management.”

Chapter election results

By PETER HOGNESS

Results of the PSC’s 2007 chapter elections were certified by the union’s Elections Committee on May 4, and the committee’s report was accepted at the May 31 meeting of the Delegate Assembly.

A complete list of those elected follows below, with those who are new to their position listed in italics.

PSC elections occur on a staggered three-year cycle: half the union’s chapters had elections in 2007, while the other half will vote for local leadership next year. Union-wide elections will next be held in 2009. Both chapter and union-wide positions have a three-year term of office.

Clarion reported on this year’s elections on page 8 of our May 2007 issue. For a more detailed description of the PSC’s structure, see page 2 of the November 2004 edition. Both are available at www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm.

Borough of Manhattan Community College: (New Caucus Slate) Chairperson, Jane Young; Vice Chairperson, Joyce Moorman; Secretary, Cynthia Wiseman; Officers-At-Large, Wambui Mbogu, Brenda Wyatt, Ruth Herz, Mildred Whiten; Delegates to the DA, Jane Young, Joyce Moorman, Ingrid Hughes, Mike Vozick, Kenneth Levinson, Rafael Corbalan, Rebecca Hill, Charles Post; Alternates to the DA, Luas Rose, Stanley Rausher, Phil Eggers, Dolores DeLuise, Angela Romeo-Molloy; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Rina Yarmish, Richard Staun.

Kingsborough Community College: (Your Faculty Slate) Chairperson, Rina Yarmish; Vice Chairperson, Theodore Markus; Secretary, Michael Sokolow; Officers-At-Large, Anthony Aizin, William Winter; Delegates to the DA, Rina Yarmish, Susan Aronoff, William Rooney, Cliff House, Donald Domín, Silvea Thomas, Michael Barnhart; Alternates to the DA, Joseph Consolo, Ronald Forman, Alfonso Garcia Osuna, Donald Hume, Gordon Bassen; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Rina Yarmish, Richard Staun.

Lehman College: (Academic Slate) Chairperson, Helene Silverman; Secretary, Sheela K. Sabani; Alternate Secretary, Duane Tananbaum; Officers-At-Large, Bruce Byland; Catherine Alusta Georges, Lois Jones, Kevin Stoller; Delegates to the DA, Helene Silverman, Eric Calyo, M. Marshall Castro, Wayne Halidi; Alternates to the DA, Patricia E. Belmon, Jean Rich; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Rina Yarmish, Richard Staun.

New York City College of Technology: (New Caucus Slate) Chairperson, Robert Cermele; Vice Chairperson, Mary Alice Browne; Secretary, Tess Tobin; Officers-At-Large, Kyla Cuordileone, Joel Greenstein, Anna Maria Lorenzo, Sharon Szeck; Delegates to the DA, Robert Cermele, Stephen James, Gary Morgan, Costas Panayiotakis, Patricia Rudden, Wendy Scribner, Gerald Van Loon; Alternate Delegates to the DA, Malcolm Banks, Joseph Wu, Andrew Ramos.

Many new local leaders

By PETER HOGNESS

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JOB SECURITY AFTER 7 YEARS

Union proposes CCE for adjuncts

By BARBARA BOWEN
PSC President

A mong the union’s in- novative proposals in this round of bargaining is a Cer- tificate of Continuous Employment for adjuncts. Once upon a time, adjuncts in higher education were truly an ad- junct to the rest of the faculty—they offered specialized courses not available from other faculty, or they taught for a semester or two in areas otherwise not addressed by the college. That has not been true for many years, especially at CUNY. For reasons that are both financial and political, the higher education workforce has been dra matically restructured, with CUNY as one of the worst offenders. Nationally, the percentage of part-time workers has increased 41% between 1990 and 2003. At CUNY, the increase in the same period was 71%.

CORE FACULTY

In 2007, we are long past the point when it is possible to de- scribe CUNY adjuncts as anything but part of the core faculty. Half of the University’s courses are taught by adjuncts, and the ratio of part-time to full-time faculty is on the rise, even as more full-timers are hired. Though formally committed to the goal of 20% full-time faculty and 30% adjuncts, CUNY continues to rely on thousands of underpaid part-timers to balance the budget as enrollment climbs. Yet CUNY management is offi- cially in denial about the way it has restructured its workforce. The smiling faculty faces you see on subway ads are never of adjuncts, even though adjuncts are the ma- jority of “who’s teaching at CUNY.” Particularly in its approach to ad- junct job security, the University continues to act as if it’s 1965. CUNY wants to have its cake and eat it too.

Management’s position is that it’s fine for adjuncts to teach half the courses and offer years or even decades of service to the same de- partment, but that when it comes to job security, each new semester is a clean slate. CUNY has stated clearly that in its view, an adjunct’s employment can be “ended” for any reason, or no reason at all” – no matter how many years the ad- junct has taught at CUNY, and no matter how well.

The union is seeking to address this issue in the current round of negotiations. We have proposed a series of one-year and multi-year appointments leading to a Certifi- cate of Continuous Employment, which would provide job security in a part-time position. The CCE would be modeled on the CCE available to lecturers and would be provided retroactively to long- serving adjuncts who met the eligi- bility threshold.

The proposal is still under dis- cussion with CUNY and the union is open to negotiation about the details, so I won’t discuss them here. The essential point made by the union’s proposal is that CUNY must reciprocate the commitment to the University and its students shown by the thousands of ad- juncts who return every semester and teach many of CUNY’s core courses. The University cannot go on relying on the long-time ex- perience of a cadre of adjuncts and then treating them like throw-away people.

EVERYONE

A CCE for CUNY’s most tested adjuncts is good for everyone: full-time faculty, students, professional staff, adjuncts themselves, and above all, students. Job security for all of us is undermined when man- agement has the option of termi- nating any faculty member at will, and students’ education is compro- mised when half of their instruc- tors receive virtually no institutional security.

The PSC is proposing a seven- year period before the CCE, so de- partments would have adequate opportunity to assess whether an adjunct is right for long-term em- ployment. Stable employment for the subset of adjuncts who met the eligibility threshold would bring much-needed stability for stu- dents, who are mystified when they learn that their professor is no longer with the college after the course is finished. It would bring increased predictability to the hiring process for department chairs while still allowing the flex- ibility to cover many courses with non-certificated adjuncts. (The proposal includes protection for graduate employees, in recogni- tion of the University’s commit- ment to providing them with teaching opportunities.)

Not least important, an ad- junct CCE would enlarge acade- mic freedom at CUNY, now seriously endangered by the fact that thousands of courses are taught by people unprotected from arbitrary or politically-mo- tivated termination.

An adjunct CCE at CUNY is long overdue. Colleges across the coun- try, and several right here in New York, have offered it successfully, and CUNY should follow their lead. The PSC remains adamant that a predominantly full-time faculty in tenured or tenure-track posi- tions – with time for research, protection of academic freedom, and decent salaries and benefits – is essential for a serious universi- ty. The union has led the campaig- for more full-time faculty positions for CUNY, we were the first to break the official silence on the issue, and we have had some success, working with man- agement, in achieving funding in- creases to address it.

RESTRICTED

But whether we like it or not, CUNY has restructured its work- force. There are still more than 8,000 adjuncts at the University. CUNY management may be en- gaged in denial about adjuncts’ role in the University, but we – whether full-time faculty, ad- juncts or professional staff – should recognize that it is in no one’s interest but management’s to deny the most experienced ad- juncts a measure of job security. It is certainly not in the interests of our students to be taught by people who don’t know from one semester to the next whether they will have a job.

An adjunct CCE would go a long way towards making the most of the talented part-time faculty we are lucky enough to have in New York City, and would make a genu- ine contribution to the education of our students.

Our vision for a new contract

The PSC campaign for a new contract is part of the union’s agenda to make CUNY what it could be – and our professional lives here what they should be.

A great university provides the conditions faculty and staff need to work. Why not CUNY?

The PSC contract demands express the union’s vision for CUNY:

• restoration of competitive salaries  
• strong tenure protections  
• support for academic freedom  
• reasonable workloads  
• excellent benefits  
• fair treatment for part-time faculty  
• family-friendly provisions  
• advancement for professional staff  
• support for research and scholarship

CUNY management’s demands express a very different agenda:

• weakening tenure  
• weakening academic freedom  
• removing department chairs from the union  
• weakening job security for HEOs  
• increasing exploitation of contingent labor  
• weakening due process  
• weakening the union  
• replacing salary steps with micro-management of salary by presidents

We support the PSC’s demand for a university that provides the salaries and conditions we need to educate our students.
Contract talks continue

By PETER HOGNESS

Contract negotiations between the PSC and CUNY management con-
tinued into the summer. But on fi-
nancial issues, CUNY has still made no initial offer.

“With no financial offer yet from management, it is increasingly diffi-
cult to think of reaching an agree-
ment before the current contract expires on September 19,” said PSC
President Barbara Bowen.

Management has pointed to the lack of progress in bargaining be-
tween New York State and its em-
ployees as a key reason for the lack of a financial proposal. CUNY must
get approval for its labor contracts from both New York State and City,
and in the past it has waited for re-
sults from City and State labor talks before it made an offer to the PSC.

DEAD END

The PSC, however, argues that this “pattern bargaining” approach is a dead end for CUNY, and that a new tack is needed. “Collective bar-
gaining patterns set by the State
and City have generally been at or
below the level of inflation,” Bowen
said. “Settlements of that size are
simply not big enough to address
the cumulative erosion of faculty
and staff salaries, or to address the
structural problems in our working
conditions such as the lack of paid
family leave or the terrible adjunct
labor system.”

Union negotiators know that State worker settlements have yet
to be concluded, Bowen said. “We
understand the history of the
bargaining process,” she told
Clarion. “It’s because of that
history that we are calling for
CUNY to make an offer that
includes enough money to fix
these long-standing problems
of the University.”

In May and June, the two
sides held bargaining sessions
every other week on non-economic
issues. July saw smaller, informal
side meetings on particular issues
and on calculating contract costs. At
Clarion press time, a full session
was scheduled for August 2 and 28.

Both sides have now presented
their lists of demands, and negotia-
tors have returned to certain issues
where there seemed some possibili-
ty of progress. Many PSC members
have attended as observers; if you
would like to be a member-observer at
a future negotiating session, con-
tact Amanda DeJesus Magalhaes at
adejesus@pscmail.org or (212) 354-
1212 x221.

No financial offer yet

Union proposals being discussed at
the table include a new approach
to the long-standing problem of ad-
junct job security: an adjunct CCE,
or Certificate of Continuous Em-
ployment. “Greater security for ad-
junct faculty is sorely needed and
long overdue at CUNY,” said bar-
gaining team member Diane Merma.

“The CCE is not new to the Univer-
sity — full-time lecturers receive a CCE after five
years.” Under the union’s proposal, she said, “an ad-
junct who is continuously
reappointed would re-
ceive a CCE after seven
years of service.” (See al-
so page 6.)

Despite making no financial offer,
management has proposed a radical
change in the salary structure — and
union members don’t like it. CUNY
negotiators want to eliminate
the current system of annual step in-
creases for full-time faculty and
HEOs and instead turn that money
over to college presidents to hand
out as they see fit.

“It’s an effort to keep people in
line,” said Phil Eggers, chair of the
English Department at BMCC. At
the June 21 Delegate Assembly
meeting, he warned that such a
change would give college manage-
ment a powerful club with which to
intimidate faculty and staff.

HEO Assistant Vincent Pizzuti signs a petition offered by HEO Assistant Lisa
Lincoln at Brooklyn College this July.

“Management’s proposal would
mean taking money out of the sys-
tem we have now, which guarantees a
movement of 3.5% to 4.5% per year
while you’re on the steps,” said
Bowen. “This is not about new mon-
ey — they want to take away
money that is already there, and put it into a
highly discretionary system in
which college presidents have ulti-
mate authority. It would mean the
end of annual increments.”

In the last round of bargaining the State
valued the increases at 1.4% per year. CUNY proposes using some of
this money, at presidents’ discre-
tion, to distribute to those on the top
steps. The union’s proposal, by con-
trast, is to increase the top steps with
new money instead of taking from
those now receiving increments.

DISHONEST

“Management likes to call this ‘mor-
it pay,’” said Costas Papanayotakis of
City Tech. “But we have to challenge
that term — it’s not honest. If they were
really concerned about merit, they
would be offering us much more gen-
erous raises!” Despite the hard work
of CUNY’s faculty and staff, he said, its
salaries are far from competitive.

Sign the petition

It’s not too late to sign on in support of
the PSC vision for a better CUNY. Go to
**Department of Labor rules that the PSC’s 2006 election was fair**

**By PETER NOGNESS**

The US Department of Labor has finished its investigation of a challenge to the 2006 PSC election, deciding to take no action on the complaint.

The federal agency informed the PSC on June 6, Executive Director Deborah Bell told the June 21 PSC Delegate Assembly. “They are closing the books,” Bell said, “and will issue a detailed report within a year.”

The 2006 union-wide election saw two slates of candidates face off against each other, the incumbent New Caucus versus the CUNY Alliance. When ballots were counted on April 25, 2006, the New Caucus was again the winner, and a week later the CUNY Alliance filed an challenge to the election. After a hearing on the complaint, the PSC Elections Committee concluded that the challenge was without merit, and in late May 2006, the union’s Delegate Assembly voted to accept the committee’s report.

“The protesting parties then appealed to our parent body, the American Federation of Teachers, as is their right,” said Bell. After examining the complaint, she said, the AFT concluded that none of the charges were serious enough to require detailed investigation and dismissed the appeal. The CUNY Alliance then took its challenge to the Bush administration’s Department of Labor (DOL).

“The Department of Labor conducted an exhaustive investigation,” noted Bell, “and concluded that the election was valid. This complaint has now been rejected at every level, and the election was found to be fair several times over.”

Frank Deale, current chair of the PSC Elections Committee, said that with the challenge resolved, it was time for the union to move forward. “The Bush administration is no friend of the labor movement and could be counted on to scrutinize the challenge with a fine tooth comb,” commented Deale, a professor at CUNY School of Law. “If it could not find an infraction, there wasn’t one to be found.” There is of course a cost to defending electoral challenges, Deale added, “but those costs are outweighed by the need for transparency and open, vigorous debate amongst different viewpoints.”

**TRANSPARENCY**

Bell told delegates that the union had been completely cooperative with DOL investigators and thanked PSC staff for their hard work in responding to federal requests. “The DOL has spent nearly a year investigating in enormous detail,” she said. “This consumed many days of staff time, during which the regular business of the union still had to continue.”

The Elections Committee report, which examine the charges in detail, is available at www.psc-cuny.org/PDF/PSC06ElectionChallengeDecision.pdf.

**What are you reading this summer?**

By Anthony

It’s about educating work-and attitude. Long Walk to Freedom is this book by Nelson Mandela, This summer my personal reading of Middle and High School Education I have to prepare my teaching candidates to really avoid prejudice as is their right,” said Bell. After examining the complaint, she said, the AFT concluded that none of the charges were serious enough to require detailed investigation and dismissed the appeal. The CUNY Alliance then took its challenge to the Bush administration’s Department of Labor (DOL). “The Department of Labor conducted an exhaustive investigation,” noted Bell, “and concluded that the election was valid. This complaint has now been rejected at every level, and the election was found to be fair several times over.”

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New savings option

Retirement plan is tax-deferred

By CLARISSA GILBERT WEISS

As of September 1, 2007, CUNY will offer its employees a new form of tax-deferred savings, the New York State Deferred Compensation Plan. Known as a "457 Plan," the program allows employees to set aside as little as 1% of their salary or as much as $15,500 per year in pre-tax contributions to various plans-sponsored investment vehicles. This amount is in addition to any money that employees invest in CUNY's existing tax-deferred options.

THREE EXECUTIVES

The 457 Plan will have three accounts assigned to CUNY's campuses to provide information to employees. There will be a telephone hotline, a managed website, reports and a quarterly newsletter. Account executives have already begun to visit CUNY campuses to explain the plan and assist employees who wish their deductions to begin in the Fall. However, enrollment can occur at any time during the year, and employees can increase, decrease or stop their contributions at any time.

START AT ANY TIME

Those employed by multiple colleges will have to file separate enrollment applications with the human resources office at each college if they wish to have payroll deductions made from each job. Although the 457 Plan is offered through the State, it is open to both senior and community college employees. All CUNY employees who receive either a New York City or State paycheck are eligible to participate. The 457 Plan is open to both full-time and part-time employees, as well as to CUNY retirees who work as adjuncts. If you reach age 70½ and are still employed at CUNY, you do not have to begin withdrawals from the plan until you retire.

Withdrawals can be made only after age 59½ and must begin no later than age 70½ if you are no longer employed either full-time or part-time at CUNY. Money contributed and the interest earned are both exempt from federal, state and local taxes until withdrawn. However, taxes must be paid on all withdrawals.

There are hardship provisions that allow individuals who qualify to withdraw money before age 59½. While the hardship rules are strict, they do not include any penalties for early withdrawals.

31 CHOICES

The NYS 457 Plan has 31 different investment vehicles, including money market funds, bond funds, balanced funds, stock funds and international funds. There is one social choice fund, PAX World, and a Lifecycle Fund. The annual administrative fee for the plan, which is run on a for-profit basis, is $14.00. For each of the mutual funds, fund operating expenses range from 0.10% to 0.35% of assets, a charge that is deducted directly from participants' accounts. Some funds may impose a short-term trade fee or be subject to a trade restriction policy.

Individuals may take out loans of up to $50,000 or 50% of assets (whichever is less) that must be paid back within five years. Employees in the New York City Teachers' Retirement System who are paying for prior service may use their own 457 plan assets to buy that time back. Employees who participate in CUNY's SRA or TDA plans can presently use those accounts to do the same thing, and the 457 Plan functions similarly.

Money that CUNY employees have in a 403B or 401K plan or an IRA may be rolled into the 457 Plan at any time. When an employee leaves CUNY service, money in his or her 457 Plan may remain in the plan or be rolled over into a 403B or 401K plan, into an IRA, or into another 457 plan. Beneficiaries may remain in the 457 Plan upon the death of the CUNY employee or retiree.

GET INFORMED

If you are interested in this type of investment, speak to the account executive when they come to your campus. As with all financial investments, the PSC encourages members to start by educating themselves about their options and opportunities. If you have questions, contact your campus human resources office or e-mail Clarissa Gilbert Weiss at the PSC at cweiss@pscmail.org.

Wireless phone service – unionized & at a discount

By CLARION STAFF

AT&T (formerly Cingular) is the only wireless company that is a company that respects workers’ rights, said Larry Cohen, who called AT&T a trade restriction policy.

The company is now offering a 10% discount to members of all AFL-CIO-affiliated unions. (This includes all PSC members, since the PSC belongs to the American Federation of Teachers, which is part of the AFL-CIO.)

"For union families, the choice in wireless is clear," said CWA President Larry Cohen, who called AT&T "a company that respects workers’ rights to organize."

Social Security & Travia leave

Full-time faculty and professional staff who will be on Travia leave and who are eligible because of age for Social Security benefits should be aware that, according to federal law, Social Security does not count sick and vacation pay as part of your earnings for the year. Since pay for Travia leave is one-half of your salary, if you are over 62 years of age and receiving Travia leave you are absolutely entitled to collect Social Security as well. The same rule applies to qualified annual leave.

The human resources office at your college will prepare a record for you to take with you to Social Security that explains that you are on Travia leave (and/or qualified annual leave) and therefore entitled to collect Social Security at the same time. Further information on this benefit, called "Special Payments After Travia Leave," can be obtained online at www.socialsecurity.gov/pps/10061.html — or you can request a printed copy by calling (800) 772-1213.

HEOs question QC prez

Maureen Pierce-Anyan puts a question to Queens College President James Muszkens at a May 30 meeting on concerns of QC employees in Higher Education Officer-series titles, organized by the PSC’s HEO Chapter.

WORLD INSIGHT

Israel boycott proposal

In May, convention delegates of Britain’s University and College Union (UCU) asked its members to consider a call from Palestinian unions to boycott Israeli academic institutions, condemning “the complicity of Israeli academia in the occupation.”

Academic unions in the US, including the AFT and AAUP, urged UCU members to reject the boycott proposal. PSC representatives to the AFT and AAUP have voted to oppose the boycott, and the PSC approved its own anti-boycott resolution at its June Delegate Assembly. Noting that “among PSC members there is a spectrum of deeply-held and sometimes conflicting positions on the issue of Israel’s expansion into the post-1967 territories,” it emphasized that “the PSC vigorously supports academic freedom and its free and open exchange of ideas among scholars – the lifeblood of academic work” and urges UCU members to reject the boycott call. (Full text is at www.psc-cuny.org/DelegateAssemblyResolutions.htm – scroll down to June 2007.)

UCU General Secretary Sally Hunt said she thinks the boycott proposal does not have the support of most UCU members.

Iraqi oil workers strike

On June 4, members of the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions (FIOU) went on strike at some oil pipelines in the southern Persian Gulf province to pressure the government to live up to its promises of wage increases, vacation time and permanent jobs for temporary workers. After the Iraqi government ordered the arrest of union leaders and the army surrounded the strikers, the union called off the strike. The AFL-CIO issued a joint statement with the UK’s Trade Union Congress supporting the PSC, which represents 26,000 workers. The government must “pull back its security and military forces and cease its menacing threats to arrest and attack these workers immediately,” the two federations declared.

French plan sparks debate

New French President Nicholas Sarkozy, who was on time publishing his plans to give the nation’s universities more autonomy — but then postponed its official introduction because of a vast and serious opposition. Students and faculty critics warn his plan lays the groundwork to privatize, and defund, French universities.

“They say it is important to open up the possibility for private companies to come to higher education, and this is because they want to put in less,” Alain Trautmann, an immunologist at the Pasteur Institute, told the Chronicle of Higher Education.
March 1807 was a momentous month for abolitionists: that month saw the passage of a bill in the Virginia House of Delegates, the first in the United States to end the slave trade. Less than two years later, the British House of Commons and then on March 25 in the UK Parliament, outlawing the African slave trade. The bicentennial of these actions comes at a time of rancorous dispute about the legacy of slavery today.

At the beginning of the 18th century, all the developed nations of Western Europe excepted chattel slavery and the African slave trade that supported it as a necessary evil, and often justified it as a mission to Christianize and civilize “heathens.” But by 1818 slavery as a legal institution had ended everywhere in the New World.

For Britain, ending the African slave trade was not easily achieved because of its importance to British commerce, maritime trade, and imperial hegemony. As Eric Williams demonstrated in his Eric Williams and Slavery (1944), the slave trade and the West Indian plantation economy supplied much of the capital for the industrial revolution, which transformed English society in the early 19th century. The threat of slave revolts, especially the 1791 uprising in St. Domingue and the irregular colonial abolition movement at home, led the British elites who profited from slavery, however reluctantly, to act against the end of the slave trade. Some believed that outlawing the trade would help preserve the West Indian plantation economy, given the propensity of African-born slaves to rise in revolt, while abolitionists saw it as a step toward the abolition of slavery itself.

The British movement to abolish the slave trade may have been the first mass social movement of modern times. Parliamentary victory is identified with William Wilberforce, a wealthy merchant and the member of Parliament for Hull on the Channel coast in Yorkshire, and the main character in the recently released feature film Amazing Grace. But the chief organizer of the movement was Thomas Clarkson, a chaplain to the Royal Navy who developed the techniques of the modern mass social movement among the mine and mill workers of the North.

Inhuman Brutality

At considerable risk to his own safety and even his life, Clarkson frequented the main cities and towns in the North of England, with pamphlets and Wedgwood badges distributed to participants. One Million Signatures

At a time when many of the workers in the new industrial towns of the North had no representation in Parliament, a common way to speak to power was through petitions. By 1807, the movement collected nearly a million signatures on the petition that Wilberforce unrolled down the aisle in the House of Commons. The petition included the names of fully one half the adult men and many women in the city of Manchester — an incredible feat at a time before the advent of telephones and e-mail.

Celebrating the bicentennial was high on the agenda of the British labor movement. To help mark the event, the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) invited the Brooklyn College Graduate Center for Worker Education to organize and lead a trade union and student delegation to the UK for the bicentennial event in March. The delegation was led by the author and included 14 graduate students in a special course, “The Politics of the Abolition of the Slave Trade,” and seven trade unionists from SEIU 1199, DC 37 Local 2067, RWDSU 338, SEIU CIR and CWA 1180, in addition to another PSC delegate, Profesor Joseph Wilson.

As Americans, the group found the welcome it received beyond the realm of its usual experience. The delegation, hosted by the Hon. Diana Johnson, MP for Hull, Wilberforce’s own constituency, toured the House of Commons, attended a luncheon and later met other MPs and senior government ministers.

Most of the delegation’s time was in Yorkshire in the industrial North of England: in Leeds, headquarters of the TUC for Yorkshire, and in Hull to meet with British trade unionists at the Trade Union Studies Center at East Riding College, to visit the Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery & Emancipation, the Wilberforce House Museum, Hull’s Guild Hall for a formal reception and dinner, and for a major conference on the group’s last day. During the tour of the Wilberforce House Museum, site of a major exhibition on the African slave trade and the fight to end it, Okende Aigbe Leharty, a Nigerian-born Brooklyn College graduate student, found a pair of metal-worked figures in a display case of artifacts showing African life in the colonial period. Okende led me to the case, and said, “Those are from my people, the Edi in Benin, but we know the incident when they were taken not as a ‘Punitive Expedition’ but as the ‘Massacre.’” Recalling the discovery later, Okende said, “I was not only flabbergasted but perplexed when I saw some of the loot that was taken during the British Massacre of 1897 at the Wilberforce House Museum. As a boy, I only heard the stories relating to the expedition. I never in my young life thought that I would come across some of the loot that was taken from the Olu’s (The King) Palace.”

The presence of these objects at the Wilberforce House museum testified to the long history of horror that Britain inflicted on Africa and Africans. This remains a contested history. Critics like Ken Livingstone, mayor of London, have attacked the Blair government for its refusal “even to recognize the slave trade as a crime against humanity.” Livingstone and others also questioned British self-congratulation for ending the slave trade, thereby ignoring the indispensable role of slaves in their own emancipation.

Rising Up

As the British newspaper the Guardian reported on the day of the bicentennial conference, groups in Jamaica questioned why the British should take so much of the credit for abolition, which indemnified the planters for the emancipation of their slaves when slavery in the British West Indies was finally abolished in 1838. As Livingstone wrote in the Guardian a few days earlier, “Material being produced today to mark the anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade makes it appear that white people liberated black – the assumption being they could not do it themselves. In reality, slaves rose against the trade from its inception. This broke it.” The culmination of the trip was a commemorative conference held at KC Stadium, Hull’s soccer venue, organized by Britain’s labor movement. Hundreds of delegates attended alongside with MPs and ministers. Cliff Williams, regional secretary of Unison (Britain’s major public sector union), remarked on the legacy of ordinary working people making it possible for Wilberforce to get the abolition bill through Parliament after a generation’s efforts.

The Rt. Honorable Alan Johnson, minister for international economic development, praised the ordinary workers who made up the abolition movement, including Sheffield metalworkers and Lancashire textile workers, both of whose products were traded in Africa. With other industrial workers, they signed abolition petitions in overwhelming numbers, risking their livelihood if the trade ended. “Without politics, nothing changes. Thanks to politics, and labor politics, things can change,” said Johnson. “Today, 1.5 million are trafficked, in bondage.” If Wilberforce were here today, he would be disappointed, he concluded, pledging that the UK would sign the European Union’s Convention on Human Trafficking.

The R. Honorable Alan Johnson, minister for education, noted the importance of the abolition movement, the African slave trade and slavery itself in the UK’s national curriculum and teacher training. Any attempt to eradicate slavery today, he said, will fail without a campaign to eradicate global poverty, and he promised to work in partnership with the Trades Union Congress to do so.

Bean and Johnson’s remarks underscored the TUC’s emphasis on commemorating the abolition of the African slave trade as so significant that it should be a part of our history. As the TUC, marking this bicentennial is a reminder that slavery’s legacy of racism still weighs heavily on our societies.

As Joseph Harker wrote in the Guardian, slavery’s “legacy, and its emotional scars, remain with us to this day.” The lingering effects of this shameful period can be seen in statistics on inequality, school achievement, the effects of this shameful period can be seen in statistics on inequality, school achievement, poverty, discrimination, crime and criminal justice. This can’t be allowed to continue.

Today

Addressing that legacy, and working to ameliorate the global poverty and oppression that persists elsewhere throughout the world today, are urgent contemporary analogs to the earlier abolition movement. As Thomas Jefferson, and then on the point of the conference when Bill Adams, the TUC regional secretary, announced the start of an International Project, building on the work begun with New York trade unionists through CUNY a few years ago. A major objective of the labor movement in the UK, he said, is to extend labor rights to all workers. By protecting immigrant rights in the workplace, “we will also protect the rights of our people,” Adams said.

Then, he, Bean and Johnson sang out the New York delegation.

For the delegates from New York, the trip abroad was rich in lessons. As one student remarked on returning, “I realized from this experience that the world is small.” Others were ready to redouble their activism in the labor movement. Everyone wondered what evidence about the slave trade and its abolition in the US, in contrast with its high-profile recognition in the UK.

Stephen Leberstein, adjunct professor of political science at Brooklyn College, developed “The Politics of the Abolition of the Slave Trade” and the New York delegation hosted by the British TUC.
Public opinion in the US seems to have finally reached a tipping point on the issue of global warming. The Cornell conference gained national and international attention in New York City in May and attended by a significant PSC contingent, constitutes an important acknowledgment of this crisis by the North American labor movement and a serious attempt to forge policies that respond to it. As those who’ve followed the science know, pre-industrial concentrations of greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide stood at 270 parts per million (ppm); today, they have risen to 390 ppm. If we are to avoid unleashing warming greater than 2 degrees Celsius, we need to keep concentrations below 450 ppm. This threshold is important because once we warm the planet more than 2 degrees, scientists theorize that positive feedback mechanisms will kick in that are likely to unleash unstoppable warming. A recent study from NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies, supported by dozens of leading environmental scientists, argues that human-made greenhouse gases have already brought the Earth’s climate close to critical tipping points.

**TIPPING POINT**

One example of such a tipping point is the melting of the Arctic icecap as the ice melts, more ocean is exposed, leading to greater absorption of solar radiation and, in turn, further melting of the ice. Less well known but perhaps more deadly are the thawing of the Siberian tundra, which threatens to free millions of tons of the potent warming gas methane, or the drying out and potential combustion of the world’s rain forests. According to top scientists such as NASA’s James Hansen, we have less than a decade to make the changes needed to stave off such runaway climate change.

Our history of enmity between labor and environmentalists, it was heartening to see significant solidarity at the Cornell conference between these two groups. Labor leaders such as Dave Foster of the United Steelworkers joined environmental leaders like the Sierra Club’s Cathy Duvall and prominent scientists such as Princeton’s Robert Socolow to articulate their concern about their collective future. Central to their message was an emphasis on social justice. Global warming is going to adversely affect New York’s working-class majority. As the world’s most powerful countries met again in Germany in early June, the US sought to derail international negotiations on a global agreement on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Discussion highlighted the tension between labor and environmental movements with social justice advocates. It has pointed to the opportunities for domestic job creation in the transition to sustainable energy production. The Apollo Alliance is not simply defensive, as has too often been the case for labor: rather, it is advancing forward-thinking plans to build a more sustainable economy in a way that shares both the environmental and economic benefits with New York’s working-class majority.

**GREEN FOR THE RICH**

Without such policies, the danger is that new green buildings in the city will be exclusively for the rich. Battery Park City’s ritzy Solaire building, with its solar panels, filtered air, locally sourced building materials, and whopping multi-million dollar apartment price tags, is a prominent example of such environmentalism for stockbrokers.

In New York City, the local branch of the Apollo Alliance has developed an ambitious ten-point plan for a socially just urban green transition. It includes promoting a “zero-waste” policy through sweeping recycling programs, greening the city’s roofs and public spaces, building thousands of new energy-efficient buildings and retrofitting old ones, and investing in renewable energy sources. This plan is exciting not simply for its attention to issues of sustainability and environmental racism, but also for the hundreds of thousands of “green collar” jobs that it would help create.

**OBSTACLES**

Yet the world is already littered with obstacles. While at the Cornell Climate Crisis conference, for example, I attended a roundtable on how labor could shape the next global agreement on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Discussion highlighted the role of undemocratic institutions such as the World Bank in bankrupting unsustainable, fossil fuel-based development policies over the last several decades. Despite this negative history, the World Bank was tapped by the G8 at the Gleneagles summit of 2005 to plan a global transition to sustainable energy. The resulting policy document could allow greenhouse gas emissions so high that they would unleash catastrophic climate change. As the world’s most powerful countries met again in Germany in early June, the US sought to derail international negotiations for a new post-Kyoto agreement for greenhouse gas reductions. It proposed to lead a new track independent of the existing, United Nations framework—essentially a stalling tactic, designed to avoid further action as long as Bush is president. Meanwhile within the US, serious measures such as the Waxman-Jeffords greenhouse initiative (which promised to cut emissions by 80% by 2050) have little chance of passage in the Democrat-controlled Congress.

The news is not all bad, though; in the absence of national leadership, regional efforts at climate mitigation have been popping up everywhere. The recent passage of changes necessary to mitigate climate change are to take place, a genuine social movement that brings together labor with environmentalists. This kind of progress will have to exert sustained pressure on these purblind leaders.

**EDUCATE**

How can the PSC contribute to this struggle? As a union focused on education, we have a vital role to play in making young people aware of the basic issues surrounding climate change and our collective future. An Inconvenient Truth, with its computer-animated senior citizen and images of Manhattan submerged by rising sea levels, underlined how climate change is a local issue for all New Yorkers. Racism, racial literacy could be included as a fundamental part of the CUNY core curriculum.

In addition to taking these issues into the classrooms at our member institutions where we work. While residents of New York consume far less resources per capita than the average American, as a result of the city’s dense housing patterns and abundant public transportation, we still produce 1% of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions—an amount equal to Portugal or Ireland.

There’s no reason our hometown shouldn’t be setting a global example for sustainability, rather than following in the wake of cities like Portland, London and Singapore, and Mayor Bloomberg’s planNYC goes some way towards addressing this need. The mayor’s congestion pricing proposal has drawn most of the media attention, but planNYC also calls for other measures such as promoting solar power for City buildings and greening the city’s rooftops.

CUNY can play a prominent role in translating this strategy to sustainability. CUNY is, after all, responsible for 10% of greenhouse gas emissions from energy use on campus. As professionals working within an institution that has such a large environmental footprint, we can have a significant impact simply by being consistent. CUNY, for example, is a two-semester community. To this end, the PSC needs to develop a forward-thinking position on a just green transition. In doing so, we can learn much from other groups such as the student-led organization Campus Climate Challenge.

**CUNY CAN CONTRIBUTE**

CUNY’s participation in a recent agreement among local institutions of higher education to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 30% is an important start, as is its recent Sustainable Construction Initiative. But more needs to be done: for example, CUNY has yet to step up and endorse the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, which commits signers to a target of zero emissions. The PSC should urge CUNY to adopt the following specific policy measures:

1) purchasing clean power from renewable resources;
2) implementing green purchasing policies for products that use less energy and are better for people and the environment;
3) upgrading efficiency through the replacement of old buildings and the retrofitting of polluting buildings;
4) constructing high-performance buildings;
5) creating a culture of energy conservation on our campuses.

**Unions for sustainability & social justice**

Sen. Bernie Sanders (Ind-VT) spoke to union activists at the Cornell conference on climate change.
The appointment this spring of Anne Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), to a federal panel on college and university accreditation fueled concerns that the department is becoming ever more politicized under Education Secretary Margaret Spellings.

Despite its official-sounding name, ACTA is a highly political organization that has been a sometimes shrill advocate for a conservative agenda within higher education. For example, after the 9/11 attacks ACTA released a report titled, “Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America and What Can Be Done About It.” Neal was one of two authors of that report, which charged that “college and university faculty have been the weak link in America’s response to the attack.”

Secretary Spellings named Neal as one of 15 members of the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), which advises the Education Secretary on recognition of accrediting agencies and related policy matters. The topic is drawing new attention in Washington: with control of the Senate and the House in the hands of the Democrats, the Bush administration has decided that accreditation policy is its best bet for implementing the recommendations of Secretary Spellings’ Commission on the Future of Higher Education, which completed its work last year.

Neal’s appointment to NACIQI is seen as particularly brazen because she is an outspoken opponent of accreditation itself. ACTA called for dismantling the accreditation system in a 2002 report and repeated that advice in a 2007 follow-up. Currently, students at non-accredited institutions such as the University of Eszotera or Patriot Bible University are not eligible for federal financial aid. ACTA wants to eliminate that restriction and end what it calls “the accreditor monopoly.” It envisions a future where accreditation associations would act “in a manner more akin to business consultants,” supported only by “voluntary payments” and thus forced “to pass the cost of the market.”

In her foreword to ACTA’s 2002 report, Neal wrote: “Putting the matter in a nutshell, we conclude that accreditation has not served to ensure quality, has not protected the curriculum from serious degra- dation and gives students, parents, and public decision-makers almost no useful information about institutions of higher education.”

Neal is among those critics, such as David Horowitz, who complain that there are too many liberals and leftists in US colleges and universities and advocate for external- ly imposed restrictions on faculty and institutions as a solution. ACTA calls for laws that would require colleges to report to state legislatures on what measures they are taking to guarantee “intellectu- al diversity” – thus putting govern- ment in the position of passing judgment on faculty members’ po- litical views.

CONSERVATIVES

ACTA was founded in 1995 as the National Alumni Forum with seed money from the politically conserva- tive Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation. Among its co-founders were Lynne Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney and former chair of the Na- tional Endowment for the Humani- ties. As part of its claim to bipartisanship, the group has listed Sen. Joseph Lieberman as a co-founder – but when Lieberman de- nounced ACTA’s post-9/11 report as antithetical to academic freedom, he wrote that he had never been a co-founder and asked ACTA to remove all such references from its website and published documents.

When Spellings appointed Neal to the NACIQI, it sparked charges that she was putting the fox into the accreditation henhouse. Among those raising concerns was Free Ex- change On Campus, a coalition that includes the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Federation of Teach- ers (more information at www.freeexchangeoncampus.org). Free Ex- change questioned whether Neal would be effective in administering a system she wants to abolish, or whether she would instead simply use her position to advance ACTA’s political agenda.

Neal dismissed such concerns. In an interview with Inside Higher Ed, she said, “Separate and apart from the commentary we have made about the system as it has operated in the past, that system is still in place, and NACIQI is responsible for ensuring as much quality as possible and accrediting the accredi- tors. Obviously those who are served are bound by the reg- ulations that apply.”

Neal’s assurance that she could keep her NACIQI hat separate from ACTA’s political agenda rang somewhat hollow, particularly when ACTA pushed out a new publication, Why Accreditation Doesn’t Work, this July. In addition to quoting ACTA’s call for abolishing accreditation, the new report puts ACTA’s broader po- litical agenda front and center: it be- gins with four “stories from the front lines,” three of which complain that higher education institutions should not promote race and gender diversi- ty as a policy goal. Neal wrote the re- port’s forward.

SKEPTICAL

“If the Department of Education wonders why colleges and universi- ties are skeptical about their mo- tives with respect to accreditation, they need look no further than this report,” Terry Hartle of the Ameri- can Council on Education told the Chronicle of Higher Education. He described it as “a hodgepodge of half-baked ideas and anecdotes.”

Several members of Congress have become concerned that, through NACIQI and a negotiated federal rule process, Secretary Spellings is trying to impose stan- dards and regulations that are nor- mally decided by Congress through the Higher Education Act. Congress is currently working on a reautho- rization of the act, which is now sev- eral years overdue. As that work moves forward, members of both the US Senate and House of Repre- sentatives have moved to chip Secre- tary Spellings’ wings.

FUNDAMENTAL

On May 35, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), a former secretary of education under the first President Bush, made a speech on the floor of the Senate in which he warned Spellings not to try an end run around the legislative process by changing accreditation procedures.

“For that reason, if nec- essary, I will offer an amendment to the Higher Education Act to prohibit the de- partment from issuing any final reg- ulations on these issues until Congress acts. Congress needs to legislate first.”

And in June, members of the House added a provision to an educa- tion spending bill that would pro- hibit the Education Department from using funds to promulgate new accreditation regulations. The vote came after Rep. George Miller, Chair of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, attempted to “circumvent Congress.”

As the clock runs out on the Bush administration, you can expect that the topic of accreditation will contin- ue to heat up. And you can expect Anne Neal to be in the thick of it.

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