What's happening on May 24? The CUNY Board of Trustees is meeting at Baruch College, and faculty and staff are rallying outside at 3:30 pm to demand a good contract. This is your opportunity to tell management that we need more than a bare-bones agreement. If CUNY is to be the university that our students deserve, we need increased salaries, Welfare Fund restorations, greater equity and improvements in the quality of our working lives. If you care, you'll be there: Monday, May 24, 3:30 pm on East 25th Street between Lexington and Third Avenues. 

**CONTRACT**

Why I'm coming on May 24

Many reasons to demand a good contract

**BENEFITS**

New transit benefit to start this Fall

This Fall you'll be able to pay for mass transit with pre-tax dollars – which could save $200-$300 per year. Express buses are included.

**RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

Workers at UAPC demand fairness

Workers at CUNY’s University Application Processing Center are facing layoffs and loss of pay and benefits. They’re demanding that management give them a fair shake.

**IRAQ**

Poverty, privatization and profit

Iraqi trade unionists have a proud history and a difficult present. As they fight rising poverty, they risk arrest by US troops.
Kudos for Russo

It is with some sadness that I read in the last Clarion that Nick Russo has retired from the PSC. Nick is a thoroughly good and caring person who really made life better for all of the professional staff here in the University. I hope that he will be hearing thanks from the many of those he so wisely counseled over the years, as he takes his well-earned retirement.

I’d also like to commend Clarion for bringing to our attention Nick’s role in fighting for human rights as a founder of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and his role in Democratic politics. I’m honored to have had him as our advisor, and feel that I owe him a great debt of gratitude for his advice and help over the years.

John Gallagher

NYU adjuncts get contract

NYU adjunct instructors reached a tentative deal with the university in the early morning hours of April 21, narrowly avoiding a strike. The deal, which lasts until 2010, gives annual raises ranging from the new contract, the majority of adjuncts will also have the opportunity for NYU-subsidized health care. For seniority, qualifying adjuncts in the ranks of semesters would receive “adequate notice” of whether they will be teaching, as well as yearly contracts. There were no paid office hours or guaranteed office space in the deal, though NYU agreed to meet with the union, ACT-UAW, regularly to address space issues. “When we began to organize our union we had nothing,” said Cheryl Fledsher, NYU adjunct and temporary UAW organizer. “This is just an incredible accomplishment. Furthermore it’s an incredible platform for growth.” NYU adjuncts are voting on the proposed agreement, and votes will be counted May 15-16.

Don’t censor scholars

The National Coalition Against Censorship has come out against a bill in Congress that would create government political oversight of federally-funded programs in international area studies. The House of Representatives passed the International Studies in Higher Education Act of 2003, H.R. 3077, and the Senate is now considering the bill, which would establish a board to monitor such programs to curb supposed bias against US foreign policy. The NCAC warned of the bill’s threat to academic freedom.

Are adjuncts truly valued at CUNY?

In my department at QC, Basic Skills, I have watched the slow but sure elimination of adjuncts as new full-time faculty are hired. Adjuncts with 20 years of successful service are being cut back from two classes to one or none each semester. This is done, in part, to eliminate the need to give office hour compensation to these same adjuncts.

As the QCC Senate representative for adjunct faculty, I wrote to President Marit on my concern for my fellow adjuncts. My letter was referred to QC Chief Operating Officer Howard Lapidus, whose response is telling: “While I can assure you that the service that has been rendered by long-term adjuncts such as yourself has been a valued part of the instruction provided at the college, I do not believe there is any way to minimize the impact on [adjuncts] that the hiring of full-time faculty represents.”

The 8,000 adjunct faculty at CUNY have provided a valued service with “no job security, substandard benefits, no disability insurance and without the ability to accumulate sick days,” as stated in the contract. The majority of adjuncts will also have the opportunity for NYU-subsidized health care. For seniority, qualifying adjuncts in the ranks of semesters would receive “adequate notice” of whether they will be teaching, as well as yearly contracts. There were no paid office hours or guaranteed office space in the deal, though NYU agreed to meet with the union, ACT-UAW, regularly to address space issues. “When we began to organize our union we had nothing,” said Cheryl Fleishner, NYU adjunct and temporary UAW organizer. “This is just an incredible accomplishment. Furthermore it’s an incredible platform for growth.” NYU adjuncts are voting on the proposed agreement, and votes will be counted May 15-16.

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Shrinking freedom

Barbara Bowen’s column in the March Clarion, on the issue of the tenure clock, was thoughtful and thought-provoking. Bowen notes that the track to tenure is a time of “very limited job security... during which we feel compelled to accept every ‘volunteer’ assignment.” It is a “time during which we experience more manage-
PSC chapter elections held

**By PETER HOGNESS**

In April, 16 PSC chapters elected local leadership for a three-year term. All races were uncontested.

Those elected included local chapter officers, delegates and alternates to the PSC Delegate Assembly and members of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Advisory Council. Ballots were mailed out on April 11 and tallied on April 22.

**Spring 2004 Chapter Election Results**

**Bronx EOC:** Chairperson, Santiago Vilafane; Delegate To The DA, Santia-go Vilafane.

**Brooklyn EOC:** Chairperson, Amy Nicholas; Vice Chairperson, Joan H. Grant-Royal; Officers At Large, Malgorzata Paciorek, Yvonne Vilmar; Delegate To The DA, Amy Nicholas; Alternates To The DA, Ecco DeSante.

**College Of Staten Island: Chairperson:** Vasilios Petratos; Vice Chairperson, Roslyn Bologh; Secretary, Frank Battraggi; Officers At Large, Sarah Benesch, Halima Jaymon, Judith Kuppersmith, Francois Njoge; Delegates To The DA, Vasiliou Nicholas; Alternates To The DA, Sherman Heller, Roberta Kihlaner, Stephen Sears; PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Ralph Giordano, Vasiliou Petratos.

**Higher Education Officers:** Chairperson, Jean Weisman; Vice Chairperson, Marc Ward; Secretary, Ann Batiuk; Officers At Large, Sherman Grant Fordham, Janet Leslie-Pierre, Diane Warsmkley, Dyon Pincus; Delegates To The DA, Joan Weisman, Sera Barrera, Brian Bateau, Frederick Brodzinski, Arthurline DeSola, Jessica Escobar Trouers, Ralph Giordano, Wayne Harewood, Nick Irons, Michael Neal, Carina Quintian, John Rose, Jose Santana, Deborah Strachan, Miriam Thompson, Marc Ward, Nyla Weeke; Alternates To DA, Lois Harrett, Ellis Delauro, Donna Gill, Everett Harrigan, Jennifer Lee.

**Kingsborough Community College:** Chairperson, Helene Silverman; Vice Chairperson, Manfred Philipp; Secretary, David Tanenbaum; Officers At Large, Stuart Chen-Hayes, Catherine Alicia Georges, Orhan Kayadag, Nancy Mol-dol, Delegates To The DA, Helene Silverman, Bruce Biglione, John Mineka, Manfred Philipp, Alternates To DA, Eric Stuart Caligo, Wayne Halliday, Liesl Jones, Ruby Phillips; PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Alice Akan, John Mineka.

**Manhattan College:** Chairperson, Joseph Bonelli, Vice Chairperson, Samuel Paul; Officers At Large, Dorothula Atkinsson, Catherine Clark-Nelson, Joan Macaffety, Evelyn McCullag, Delegates To The DA, Joseph Bonelli, Alternate To The DA, Karen Barry.

**Medgar Evers:** Chairperson, Edward J. Catapano; Vice Chairperson, Mohsin Patwary; Secretary, John Flowers; Officers At Large, Derigide Hunter, Joyce Silber, Earlone Smythe, Mary Unul, Delegate To The DA, Edward Catapano, Alternate To DA, Mohsin Patwary; PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Darius Movassaghi.

**New York City College Of Technology:** Chairperson, Robert Cornelle; Vice Chairperson, Sharon Swacker; Secretary, Mary O’Riordan; Officers At Large, Steven Gerard, Joel Greenstein, Brian Keener, Steve Pannof, Delegates To The DA, Robert Cerce, Mary Alice Bueno, Kyle Cuadraleda, Patricia Ruddens, Wendy Scribner, Teresa Tobin, Alternates To DA, Stanley Carroll, Barry Keating, Joan Levinson, Fredrey Siegel, PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Mary Alice Browne, Justine Escobar.

**Queens College:** Chairperson, Facia White; Vice Chairperson, David Hooks; Officers At Large, Angelo Fernandes, Sherwin Hunt, Donna McFarlane; Delegate To The DA, Facia White; Alternate To The DA, Nathan Williams.

**Queensborough Community College:** Chairperson, Jacob Appleman; Vice Chairperson, Ian Pecorino; Secretary, JoAnn Wein; Officers At Large, Wilba Simmon, Anthony Bales, Anthony Kolos, Norton Reid; Delegates To DA, Jacob Appleman, Ellyn Feldman, Philip Pecorino, JoAnn Wein, Paul Weiss; Alternates To DA, Devin Feldman, Kenneth Golden, Jeffrey Host, Elaine Delu, Vecchin; PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Tom Gerson, David Klarberg.

** Registrars:** Chairperson, Fred Mateosky; Delegate To DA, Fred Mateosky.

**Research Foundation:** Chairperson, Andrew Dixon; Vice Chairperson, Emilel Loizzo; Secretary, Dawn Sievers; Delegate To DA, Andrew Dixon.

**Retirees Chapter:** Chairperson, Irwin Yellowitz; Vice Chairperson, Robert Cornelle; Secretary, Mary Bruce-Jen-nings, Officers At Large, Francine Breuer, Theodore Gottesman, Martin Kaplan, Jane Moore; Delegates To DA, Irwin Yellowitz, Ed Altermayer, Elly Alpert Jonas, Alternates To DA, Alvin Bachman, Judith Bronfman, James Perelstein, Ezra Seltzer; PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Advisory Council, Irwin Yellowitz.

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**UAPC workers fight for jobs & rights**

**By MAGGIE DICKINSON**

Dozens of workers at CUNY’s University Application Processing Center are about to lose their jobs, dozens more could lose years of seniority — and all of them are mad about it. “There is overwhelming dissatisfaction with the way we are being treated,” said UAPC worker Julio Medina. “Years of loyalty are being repaid with a slap in the face.”

Eighty-five percent of UAPC employees are currently paid by the CUNY Research Foundation (RF). After losing a grant from the NYC Department of Education that funds UAPC, the University has decided to transfer two-thirds of these workers to the CUNY payroll; the rest will be left to an uncertain future.

**WALKOUT?**

RF management has made little effort to find positions for the 35 UAPC employees who will be left without a job, and it has cancelled three bargaining sessions scheduled to discuss these issues. After the April 22 bargaining session was cancelled, workers took a strike vote and gave the PSC bargaining team the authority to call a walkout.

Seventy-five workers are slated to be placed on the CUNY payroll by September 1 — but in an apparent attempt to minimize costs, most workers will lose their seniority and many will be placed in temporary and provisional entry-level positions. Skilled veteran workers with many years of service would be demoted to the status of new hires on probation.

**LOSING RETIREMENT**

“I am less than one year away from retirement age,” said admissions evaluator Connie Berkley. “I am going to lose all my retirement benefits. On top of that, they have the audacity to place me on a provisional entry-level position after 17 years of service.” Yet Berkley would be doing exactly the same job she has done for years, with no benefit losses.

When UAPC negotiating team representatives and PSC leaders met with CUNY management on April 21 to discuss CUNY’s plans for the April 22 bargaining session was cancelled, union representatives object to several elements of CUNY’s plan. Refusing to credit converted PSC-CUNY employees with seniority for the years they have spent processing applications was insulting, union representatives said. “This is a demotion,” they told Executive Vice Chancellor Allen Dobrin. “You’re offering us less than we have now.” At Clarion press time, negotiations with CUNY were continuing.

“CUNY is hiring these workers because they know how to do the job, so you need to show them some respect,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “They should not be treated as new employees by CUNY. They should get credit for their years of service at UAPC, and be able to carry over their leave accruals.”

**SEVERANCE**

According to CUNY’s plan, only 20% of the UAPC positions converted to CUNY lines would be in PSC-represented positions. “These workers are experienced, perform complex work, interact with students and should be put in PSC titles,” Bowen objected.

Particularly disturbing to many workers is the fact that the RF made only a minimal offer on severance pay for terminated employees, though the PSC bargaining team presented its proposal on these issues months ago in contact talks.

In thirty years, we did a damn good job for CUNY,” said Mary Brown, a union bargaining team member and freshman admissions evaluator. “These offers are like a smack in the face.”
Contract enforcement and you

Clarion talks with Nkechi Agwu

What part of the conference was especially useful to you, as someone training to be a new grievance counselor?

The Saturday workshop I went to talked about arbitral tribunals and precedents. They summarized what happens at Step One of the grievance process, the college level, and Step Two, the University level. If it’s still not resolved, the PSC has a Grievance Policy Committee that decides whether to take it to arbitration.

We discussed what the Grievance Policy Committee has to consider when it decides whether to take a case to arbitration – strengths and weaknesses of a case, what kind of precedent it could set if we win or lose. Then we went through grievance arbitration cases, and discussed what issues had led to their being won or lost.

What about the new faculty agreement?

This fall there are plans for local campus-based meetings on contract enforcement, with a focus similar to the meeting you attended. Who do you think should go?

PSC suffers setback at New York labor board

Decision appealed to courts

The three-person New York State Public Relations Employment Board (PERB) has overturned its Regional Director’s decision that CUNY must negotiate with the PSC over key aspects of CUNY’s intellectual property policy. The PSC has appealed PERB’s decision to the courts.

PERB’s decision is not about intellectual property per se. Rather, the March 26 ruling concerns the interpretation of Article 2, a management rights clause in the PSC-CUNY contract. The State Board found in favor of CUNY’s argument that language in Article 2 waives the PSC’s right to demand bargaining over employment policies that are already in place. PERB’s decision is a significant blow to the PSC’s efforts to protect the rights of academic workers.

By STEVE LONDON

PSC First Vice President

The board is composed of Pataki appointees.

What does PERB’s decision mean for the future?

This is a very important kind of conference for anybody who can find the time. It’s very helpful, in terms of knowing more about the contract – what your rights are, what things can be the subject of a grievance, when to file an individual grievance or when you can have a class action.

So I think that for any rank-and-file union member, it would be very educational.

You mentioned education before as part of contract enforcement. Could you say a little more about what that means?

A lot of the issues we discussed at the conference are things members may not be aware of, because often people only read the contract when they know they have a problem. But sometimes that is to late. If you don’t know what your rights are, you won’t be able to defend them.

We need to do a lot in terms of empowering our members through education. Maybe there should be a section on a regular basis in Clarion, on contract rights – because people do read Clarion.

We have had articles in the paper on contract rights, but mainly on things that are new. I think the standing things also need to be talked about, especially now that we have a lot of new faculty. To them, everything is new!

There’s a lot that can be done in a period of contract education. The campus meetings they are planning for the fall will be good for the membership. And if they have an anti-labor faculty workshop, like they had in March at Baruch, they could have a panel dealing with contract rights. Particularly the new faculty would find this useful, because most are not aware of what the contract says.

What can we do to encourage the new faculty?

One thing is the importance of time. If you think you have a grievance, time is of the essence. Sometimes you can lose a case just because you waited too long to file. If a member thinks the contract is being violated, they should file immediately before you even get to a grievance, it starts with the type of contract you have in the first place.

Have you been in a union before?

No, this is my first. But I’ve always been in organization. While I was in graduate school, at Syracuse, I was president of the international students’ organization, and I was also a graduate senator. But we didn’t have a union.

Grievance Policy Committee that decides whether to take it to arbitration. It starts before you even get to a grievance.

PERB upheld CUNY’s interpretation of Article 2, a management rights clause in the PSC-CUNY contract, even though these would pose terms and conditions of employment as mandatory subjects of bargaining, including those mandatory subjects in CUNY’s intellectual property policy.

In rejecting CUNY’s interpretation of Article 2, Judge Maier recognized “the right to bargain concerning terms and conditions of employment” to be a “strong and sweeping policy of the State.” He concluded that it was not demonstrated “that the PSC intended to relinquish its rights to bargain over mandatory subjects of bargaining contained in the intellectual property policy in perpetuity.”

The PSC appealed this decision to PERB, which is a state administrative agency responsible for enforcing labor law. PERB’s decision in this case is significant because it clarifies the relationship between labor law and intellectual property law, and has implications for the rights of academic workers.

Adjunct unemployment insurance

Summer is fast approaching, which means many part-time instructors at CUNY will be out of work. So can you get unemployment insurance? If you received a letter of non-reappointment, it should be no problem. If you did not, it could be more complicated. For full information, read Marcia Newfield’s article from the May/June 2003 issue (p. 9) of Clarion at www.psc-cuny.org/communications.htm. The PSC is pushing for the State to change the law that makes it hard for part-time academic workers to collect unemployment insurance. You can help by going to the ACT NOW page of the PSC Web site at www.psc-cuny.org and sending a fax to politicians in Albany.

By PETER HODNESS

On April 16 and 17, about 60 people attended a PSC conference on “Fighting for Our Rights: The Grievance Process & Contract Enforcement.” One of those attending was Nkechi Agwu, professor of math at BMCC. Clarion spoke with her afterwards.

What did you learn that you think others on your campus would be interested to know?

One thing is the importance of time. If you think you have a grievance, time is of the essence. Sometimes you can lose a case just because you waited too long to file. If a member thinks the contract is being violated, they should file immediately before you even get to a grievance, it starts with the type of contract you have in the first place.

They can talk to their local campus grievance officer, or phone the main PSC office directly.

Another thing we discussed is that contract enforcement is not just about grievances. It also includes education and political action. It starts before you even get to a grievance, it starts before you even get to a grievance.

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Anything else you’d like to add?

The last thing I want to talk about is the importance of support for the grievance process in our contract negotiations. The current demands by management really go to the heart of it.

For example, management wants to change the contract so that a delay in a grievance of over three months would mean a worker would lose it completely – regardless of who or what led to the delay. This would give them a real incentive for dragging their feet!

In fact, management is the cause of most of the delays by far – they miss the time limits again and again. We need to change the contract to make sure that the time limits are more strictly enforced.
DC 37 contract settlement

State workers also reach agreements

By TOMIO GERON

District Council 37, NYC’s largest public employee union, reached an agreement on a new contract with the City on April 20. A ratification vote will be conducted by mail from May 10 to June 1.

The deal covers the period 7/1/02 – 6/30/05, and provides a one-time $1,000 cash payment in the first year, a 3% salary increase in the second and at least a 2% raise in the third. New hires would be paid 15% less than their jobs’ normal minimum rates for the first two years of employment starting July 2004.

A key issue in the negotiations was Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s often-repeated position that all salary increases must be self-funded and that he would give no retroactive raises. “The mayor has been quite clear that there will be no collective bargaining increases unless they have been funded through productivity,” Labor Commissioner James Hanley said in January 2003.

CITY DELIGHTED

Although Bloomberg retreated from this stand in the pay provisions for the first two years of the settlement, City officials were delighted that the wage increase in the third year would be funded by the cuts in pay and benefits for new hires, which they termed “productivity increases.” DC 37 members will get an additional 1% pay increase in the third year only if the union and City agree on further “productivity initiatives.”

“We have delivered the best possible contract we could for our members,” said DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts. “We have achieved a fair contract that provides fair productivity increases.” DC 37 members currently earn an average of about $28,000 a year.

The City has a tradition of “pattern bargaining,” in which the first union to set the rate sets the framework for subsequent agreements. Bloomberg hopes to impose terms of the DC 37 settlement on other municipal unions, particularly the funding of salary increases through concessions. But this year there will be more resistance than usual to accepting this first agreement as a pattern.

“It is hard to see how many of these provisions could be applied to the Department of Education,” said UFT President Randi Weingarten, arguing that cuts in teachers’ starting pay would hurt the schools. “It took a significant increase in starting salaries in the fall of 2002 to enable the city – for the first time in years – to attract enough certified teachers for our classrooms.” The UFT has requested that the Public Employment Relations Board declare it an impairment in its bargaining, which could result in the appointment of a state mediator.

The terms of this contract settlement would work against the ongoing restoration of CUNY after many years of under-funding,” said John Hyland, PSC treasurer and chair of the union’s Soli-darity Committee. “The current hiring of full-time faculty and staff would be weakened by a two-tiered system. We reject the City’s austerity framework for this round of negotiations and refuse the diminution of professional salaries and working conditions for the University that educates NYC’s working people.”

Uniformed unions likewise rejected the idea of lower starting pay. “With a lack of competitive NYPD salaries,” said Pat Lynch, president of the police union, “it is clear that this type of settlement will not serve the best interest of the City of New York.” The PBA has also filed for an impasse declaration.

But Markey said he felt this contract was the best that DC 37 could get under current circumstances. “It was with great reluctance that I voted for it,” he said, calling the settlement a “disaster for the labor movement in the city of New York.”

New hires in DC 37 are already paid about 7% less for their first year on the job under a provision established in the early 1990s. The settlement would change this to 15% for the first two years.

New workers would also receive two fewer sick days for the first five years of employment, earn vacation days more slowly, and permanently lose an annual floating holiday. Extra pay for night-shift hours would also be reduced.

Meanwhile, several unions reached agreements with New York State in March. CSEA Local 1800, which represents 70,000 State employees, made a deal with the City to a four-year settlement with a one-time payment of $800 in the first year and 2.5%, 2.75% and 3% salary increases in subsequent years. The $800 would be added to base salary at the contract’s end; none of the salary increases are funded by increased pay raises. Some health plan co-pays and deductibles would rise, with no major changes in coverage.

A four-year agreement with Unite-University Professions of SUNY includes the same $800 cash payment in the first year, with $800 added to base pay at the contract’s end. Beyond this, base pay would rise by at least 9.5% over four years, with additional funding for discre-tional salary increases. Changes to health coverage include slightly increased co-pays for doctor’s visits, a new prescription drug formulary and increased supplemental contributions to the union benefit fund.

State budget logjam

PSC opposes CUNY cuts

By TOMIO GERON

The State budget is stuck in Albany gridlock once again – and intense negotiations over public school funding are making it even harder for the key players to come to an agreement.

At issue is the court order in the landmark Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. Last June New York’s highest court upheld a tri-al court ruling that the State did not give New York City’s public schools enough funding to provide all pupils with “a sound, basic education,” as required by the State constitution.

But the court did not detail how much the State must pay, and Albany’s leaders – Governor George Pataki, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno – have been at odds over both the amount and how to pay it.

DEADLINE

The court set a July 30 deadline for the State to create an adequate educational funding plan, but Albany’s politicians do not appear to be close to a deal. Silver has reportedly proposed a figure somewhere between $7 and $11 billion, while a Pataki-appointed commis-sion called for a $2.5 to $5.6 billion increase.

The governor has not publicly backed any amount beyond the $2 billion that he proposed in January, to be raised through new forms of legalized gambling. At the end of April, Bruno said an agree-ment may prove impossible and that the court may have to impose its own solution.

The outcome will have a major impact on the shape of the State budget, which is overdue. This year Albany missed the April 1 deadline for the 20th year in a row.

CITY CUTS PROPOSED

Pataki’s January budget proposal includes an additional $28.6 million in CUNY senior college funding – but this is $186.4 million short of the amount needed to pay for mandatory increases in benefits and energy costs. The Pataki plan calls for cuts to the operating budgets of nine se-nior colleges, and proposes reducing base aid to CUNY community colleges by 5% per full-time equivalent stu-dent from $2,300 to $2,185, re-structuring the Tuition Assistance Program and cutting funds for both SEEK and College Discovery.

At the City level, Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s executive budget pro-posal would slash City support for CUNY and CUNY students by more than $17 million. This includes a $5.4 million reduction for community colleges, elimination of the $5.5 million Peter Vallone Scholarships, and axing the $4.5 million “safety net” program for community college students affected by last summer’s tuition hike, plus a $124,000 budget cut for the Hunter College Campus Schools.

PRESSURE

“PSC members must maintain a high level of pressure on Albany,” said Cecelia McCall, PSC secretary and legislative coordinator. “It is critical that the State CUNY’s public school funding a hot topic

Public school
NEWS

PSC at NYSUT meet

By TOMEO GERON

The PSC was a strong presence at this year’s Representative Assembly of New York State United Teachers, with delegates adopting a range of PSC-sponsored resolutions. And NYSUT turned out in support of the PSC and its other NYC affiliates: over 2,000 delegates marched in solidarity with contract demands by the PSC, UFT and United College Employees at FIT.

NYSUT is New York’s statewide education union, encompassing faculty and staff from kindergarten through grade school, and the Representative Assembly (RA) is its annual policy-making convention. At this year’s RA, held March 27, the PSC had a particular impact on issues of public higher education, with delegates adopting eight PSC resolutions.

MODEL BILL

The most important of these was a measure that calls on NYSUT to draft “omnibus model legislation” on public higher education in New York State. This is crucial to developing comprehensive plans for investment in SUNY and CUNY, said PSC Executive Council member Michael Fabricant.

The proposal, which received strong support from other NYSUT locals, will address a range of issues: the composition of boards of trustees; ratio of full-time to part-time faculty; adjunct equity; sourcing of academic work; academic freedom; health benefits and student access to college.

Drafting legislation for real change

By spelling out what kind of public higher education New York really needs, Fabricant explained, the model legislation will “orient legislators to the range of needs that exist and will gradually sign them on to the kind of structural change and investment that needs to occur.” The goal, he added, is to counter “the initiatives [that have] led to disinvestment in public higher education.”

The RA also acted on two PSC resolutions on part-time faculty. The first endorsed the AAPP and the AFT statements on contingent labor, which call for equity in pay and benefits and participation in both union and college life. The second resolution, which calls on NYSUT to draft legislation to address inequities for contingent faculty at public colleges, was forwarded to the NYSUT Board of Directors for review.

PSC at NYSUT meet

Higher education in focus

PSC Executive Council member Diane Menna said that support for adjunct equity had grown stronger since last year’s RA. “I think raising the issue has made a difference,” Menna said. “There’s much more public attention on the lives of part-time faculty.”

PATRIOT ACT

Delegates also passed a PSC resolution opposing the USA PATRIOT Act’s restrictions on civil liberties. However, the resolution’s statement of opposition to PATRIOT II, a follow-up bill drafted by the Bush administration, was removed by an amendment that won by a rare show of hands, after a voice vote was too close to call. Another PSC proposal, opposing the war and occupation in Iraq, provoked heated debate but did not pass; delegates instead approved a resolution that did not indicate opposition to the war.

Two PSC resolutions were approved by the Civil and Human Rights Committee and passed by the RA. One called for NYSUT to encourage discussion of the war in Iraq within NYSUT locals and at schools and campuses; the other supported Colombian teacher unionists, who have been targeted for violence by paramilitary death squads.

UNEMPLOYMENT

PSC resolutions calling for the repeal of the Rockefeller Drug Laws and bolstering the NYS unemployment insurance trust fund were both adopted. A measure calling for NYSUT support of the PSC position for free tuition at CUNY did not pass, but delegates did back a PSC proposal to endorse state legislation that would bar CUNY or SUNY from rejecting applicants based solely on their scores on standardized tests such as the SAT.

A highlight of the RA was the delegates’ march and rally in support of the PSC, UFT and United College Employees at FIT, all currently in contract talks. PSC President Barbara Bowen, UFT President Randi Weingarten and UCE President Lou Stollar each spoke at the rally, thanking NYSUT members for speaking out for their fellow teachers.

“I think everyone needs to make a living wage,” said Rochester teacher Tom Arena. “We had the support of NYSUT last year [on our contract], so we’re here in support of fellow NYSUT members to do the same for them.”

BUILDING ALLIANCES FOR JUSTICE

When you ask Lorraine Cohen about being named a NYSUT Higher Education Member of the Year, the response is characteristic: “I am deeply honored by this award,” she says, and then quickly moves on to a topic with which she’s more comfortable: “It was an opportunity to talk about the issues.”

COLLEGE ACCESS

In her speech accepting the award at NYSUT’s annual meeting in April, Cohen focused on an issue that’s particularly close to her heart: the challenges facing women on welfare. “As a result of the welfare reform act of 1996 and the introduction of workfare, thousands of students [were] pushed out of CUNY,” she said. “20,000 students had disappeared.”

As a way to reduce either poverty or the number of people on public assistance, Cohen thought this was completely backward. A professor of sociology at LaGuardia Community College, she cites “studies around the country showing that education, and higher education in particular, is the way to permanently get people off of welfare.”

In 2002, Cohen brought the issue to the PSC Women’s Committee, which she co-chairs, and soon the committee had joined the Coalition for Access to Training and Education. CATE was working to change City law so that people on welfare could count college study as part of their “work requirement” – and Cohen and other Women’s Committee activists rolled up their sleeves and joined the campaign.

Brenda Stewart of Families United for Racial and Economic Equality (FUREE) says that for Cohen, no task was too big or too small: “Whatever I asked her to do, she was really willing and able,” says Stewart – “M.C., lobbyist, or chef.” The latter refers to Cohen’s work on the barbeque grill at a celebration of CATE’s legislative victory. Intro 93, the reform measure backed by CATE, passed the New York City Council by a wide margin in 2003, though it still faces legal challenges.

Building alliances for justice

By TOMEO GERON

By spelling out what kind of public higher education New York really needs, Fabricant explained, the model legislation will “orient legislators to the range of needs that exist and will gradually sign them on to the kind of structural change and investment that needs to occur.” The goal, he added, is to counter “the initiatives [that have] led to disinvestment in public higher education.”

The RA also acted on two PSC resolutions on part-time faculty. The first endorsed the AAPP and the AFT statements on contingent labor, which call for equity in pay and benefits and participation in both union and college life. The second resolution, which calls on NYSUT to draft legislation to address inequities for contingent faculty at public colleges, was forwarded to the NYSUT Board of Directors for review.

PSC’s Lorraine Cohen

In 2002, Cohen brought the issue to the PSC Women’s Committee, which she co-chairs, and soon the committee had joined the Coalition for Access to Training and Education. CATE was working to change City law so that people on welfare could count college study as part of their “work requirement” – and Cohen and other Women’s Committee activists rolled up their sleeves and joined the campaign.

By Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

Cohen has a special interest in those who would benefit from the new law; she has taught many women on welfare in her classes at LaGuardia. She taught in the COPE program for about five years, working with people – mostly women – on public assistance. “I never forgot these women,” says Cohen, who not only taught in the program but gave the graduation speech one year. “The program was incredibly successful.”

STEREOTYPES

Particularly upsetting to Cohen are public perceptions and media depictions of women on welfare – most of whom, she says, are extremely hard-working. “I’m just enraged by the stereotypes because they are so inadequate and so wrong,” she explains. “They’re brutal and vicious and completely misunderstand the deeper causes of poverty.”

Cohen has witnessed the effect that education can have on women, many of whom are single parents struggling with childcare, health problems or abusive relationships. “Education is a transformative experience. It’s not just skills, it gives you a sense of self that you wouldn’t get from too many other places,” she says. “These women showed they have the discipline to study and to do well in their courses. It was very empowering for them.”

Cohen has been an activist since her days in college at SUNY Potsdam. She was expelled from Ohio State for her part in anti-war and anti-racist protests while studying for a master’s degree; she later got her Ph.D. at the CUNY Graduate Center. Cohen is now a delegate to the PSC Delegate Assembly and a member of LaGuardia’s chapter executive committee.

ORGANIZING TASKS

She says the Women’s Committee is now working on a project, including monitoring federal legislation on welfare, and a plan to get CUNY to do more recruitment of students on public assistance.

Cohen’s stubborn persistence on Intro 93 is an example of the kind of nuts-and-bolts work that it takes to build durable alliances between unions and community groups – and she thinks support for community organizing is essential to labor’s future.

“Building a movement for social justice helps to build the power of the labor movement,” she explains. “By uniting with a broader group of social actors, we can get the power and the strength we need to win.”
Tenure debate update

By PETER HOGNESS

CUNY management's proposal to lengthen the tenure clock from five years to seven years has been discussed at a slower pace in recent weeks. There is still no sign that the State Legislature is prepared to support the idea.

On April 28, the Faculty Council at BMCC passed a resolution against the proposal. Faculty governance bodies at Bronx CC and York have also come out against the seven-year plan.

“To be fair to this University, and to the candidate, we must give people more time to complete their work,” Chancellor Matthew Goldstein declared at a University Faculty Senate conference on April 23.

But a broad reduction in teaching loads is not the way to do this, Goldstein contended: “While reducing the teaching load from three to six hours is a wonderful ideal to strive for, and something that I would support, the fact is that it is dead on arrival,” he said, arguing that it would simply cost too much.

“We live in a post-tenure university,” said Larry Hanley, editor of the AAUP's Academe. “Tenured or tenure-track faculty are now the smallest portion of the academic workforce. The fact that tenure is increasingly “abnormal” gives rise to certain distortions within the university, Hanley said, such as “the idea that tenure is a rare and rarifying gift rather than an indispensable condition for academic activity.”

“More time” and “a longer tenure clock” are not the same thing, argued PSC President Barbara Bowen. What junior faculty need, she said, is not more years in which they are still too busy, but more time within a given week. CUNY must not “substitute the illusion of investment for real investment,” she said. “To have two more years without the protections of academic freedom is not an investment.”

RESOURCES NEEDED

Junior faculty “are overwhelmed by this proposal, unless it’s preceded by additional resources,” said David Kazanjian, associate professor of English at Queens.

In his own conversations with over 100 new faculty, he said, “the few who have voiced support, without exception, are those who already work under conditions that many of us would like to have: 2-2 teaching loads, research startup money, even childcare. Let’s struggle to get more resources first. Then we’ll talk about time to tenure.”

On May 24 at 3:30 pm, PSC members will rally for a new contract outside the Trustees’ meeting at Baruch College.

Union members tell our Roving Reporter

Why I’m coming on May 24

ROOPALI MUKHERJEE
Assistant Professor of Media Studies
Queens College

I’m coming to show solidarity. We have a strong union and we’ve had some recent successes, like the research search for new faculty. Right now is an important moment, when we could go forward or back.

It would be easy to rest on one’s laurels, to assume that the union just take care of things. But the rank and file needs to keep the pressure on.

Management is being somewhat audacious, if you look at what they say in negotiations or how they handled this issue of the tenure clock. After the union’s gains in the last contract, they are trying to push back. But we also have an opportunity. This is the time, man! Now is the time to push for us to achieve more.

CUNY IN BRIEF

No way, Beaufait

Faculty at New York City College of Technology are incensed over President Fred Beaufait’s rejection of the March election of a department chair. Stanley Carroll, a professor in the Business Department faculty that he would not certify Carroll and that he would terminate Carroll as department chair immediately. CUNY Bylaws clearly state that department chairs are elected by the faculty and the college president has the power to approve the chair. Only in exceptional cases are chairs not approved. There are only two known cases of a department chair being rejected in the past 40 years at CUNY. The PSC Chapter at City Tech passed a vote of no confidence in Beaufait, and the PSC Delegate Assembly also passed a resolution condemning Beaufait’s violation of CUNY’s Bylaws.

New Malo trial to start

The University Faculty Senate and the Hostos College Senate both passed resolutions in April calling for charges against Hostos student Miguel Malo to be dropped. Supporters of Malo have also delivered a petition with about 1,000 signatures to the Bronx District Attorney demanding that charges be dropped. Malo, arrested after he held up a sign protesting college policies, faces a new trial date starting in May. Malo’s previous trial, for allegedly assaulting a campus police officer in August 2003, ended in a mistrial in December, 2003. Malo was protesting against fees for English language classes and cuts in courses taught in Spanish. Malo’s new lawyer is the activist Lynne Stewart.
The PSC budget and our members’ interests

By JOHN HYLAND
PSC Treasurer

The annual audit of the PSC's financial statements, presented on this page, is both a review of the union's accounts and an indication of a solid financial foundation for our activities with and for the membership.

This commentary aims to clarify the meaning of the budget beyond the more technical accounting categories, by describing the types of activities on which the PSC's money is spent. It is based on the categories used in the monthly financial reports to the union's Delegate Assembly. (The PSC is funded separately and operates separately from the Welfare Fund and the Credit Union.)

GOALS

The PSC budget reflects the union's history, organizational situation, and strategic decisions. Our goal is to increase PSC power to advance the interests of workers we represent, in salaries, benefits and working conditions (which also reflect students' learning conditions). All our activities, and therefore all our expenses, are focused on this goal.

In 2000, the PSC had 9,800 members; in 2004, we have 14,900. This growth has in many ways made us stronger; it also means that the PSC's budget must meet an increased demand for union services.

A key category of expenses is mobilization and outreach: ultimately, our union's power depends on membership participation, defined in this category as organizing new members, legislative activity, community relations, Clarion, committee work, and budget and contract campaigns. Ten percent of the PSC budget is in this category, but this figure can be misleading. In fact, our paid staff, equipment and office space and our affiliates are all essential to our mobilization and outreach efforts.

Recent resources for 29% of the PSC's budget. We have 15 professional staff (including 4 organizers) and 11 support staff, who work on contract enforcement, benefits, organizing, membership services, communication and finances.

A third category of expenses (11%) goes to operations: space, equipment, supplies, services and insurance. These expenses are essential to our staff, helping to service and mobilizing our members, for the organizational life of the PSC, providing the infrastructure for the "bread and butter" activities of the PSC.

A fourth category of expenses is dues to our national affiliates (American Federation of Teachers and the American Association of University Professionals). These expenses are voluntary, reflect certain decisions or considerations: that our members benefit from having a central office with staff providing member services, and that national and state affiliations are in our interest. We have more immediate discretion and opportunity in the area of membership mobilization and organizing and legal services.

MOBILIZING

As the audit indicates, the PSC operated with a $229,894 deficit in fiscal year 2002-2003. The union has been running deficits in the past; the 2002-2003 deficit was largely due to the high level of activity to counter the massive cuts in CUNY's budget proposed by Governor Pataki. The PSC has also had many years of surplus, enabling reserves to rise to $4,928,672. As of 3/31/04 this year's operating surplus has a surplus of $19,000.

We continually struggle with the mutual relationship of union goals and the best use of our resources. We want you, the membership, to be clear about the financial situation of your union; we elected the Executive Council and Delegate Assembly and the Finance Committee all want your input.

For the past two years, the Finance Committee has held open meetings on the annual PSC budget that are open to the public at the DA in the Fall, a practice which will continue in Fall '04. And at any time you can reach me with your comments at jhyland@pscmail.org.

November 21, 2003

Loeb & Troper

FINANCES
Transit benefit begins this fall

The way is clear for a new transit benefit for CUNY employees to begin this fall, allowing faculty and staff to save money by paying for public transit with pre-tax dollars. CUNY central administration says they plan to start the program at the beginning of the fall semester.

The optional benefit, known as a TransitBenefit Transportation Spending Account, will be provided through a special debit card. The debit card, from JP Morgan Chase, cannot itself be used on subways or buses, but rather can be used to purchase a MetroCard at MetroCard vending machines.

TAX SAVINGS

The money you choose to put into this program is exempt from federal, state and local taxes, thus lowering your overall tax bill. Most CUNY employees will save around $200 to $300 per year. (Some will save more, others less – the exact amount depends on both how much you put into the program and your tax rate.)

The program is an enhanced version of the City of New York’s original transit benefit. It can be used to pay for transportation on express buses and the currently private bus lines in Queens, as well as the MTA. Faculty and staff will have four different options for bi-weekly payroll deduction: occasional rider ($20), frequent rider 1 ($32.50), frequent rider 2 ($40), and express bus rider ($41.15, pre-tax, and $49.85 post-tax). Participants must pay an administrative fee of $1.80 per month.

There have been several delays in implementing this benefit for CUNY employees. First, because many CUNY employees are paid by New York State, legislation was required to permit the pre-tax deduction. The PSC lobbied successfully to get enabling legislation passed, but further delays arose due to problems in re-programming the State’s payroll system. The PSC, in coalition with other CUNY unions, pressed for action on implementation, and worked to secure the best version of this benefit.

The debit card offers flexibility that allows participants to suspend their contributions for a period of time and resume them later (e.g., during the summer or while on sabbatical), and makes it possible for part-timers who are going on or off payroll to participate.

FULL-TIME OR PART-TIME

“The union made it a principle from the start that this benefit should be available to both part-time and full-time employees,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen, noting that CUNY has pledged to work with the union to iron out any difficulties.

Before the new benefit takes effect, faculty and staff will receive more information in the mail about the plan’s details and how to enroll.

To sign up, all you have to do is bring your discharge document to a local VA hospital. For more information, call 877-227-VETS or go to www.v1.va.gov/health-benefits/.

Get ready for retirement

Pre-Retirement Conference: The annual PSC Pre-Retirement Conference will be held on Friday, June 4, 2004, from 9 am to 4 pm at the CUNY Graduate Center. This conference is designed for members who are about five years away from retirement. The conference will feature speakers on financial planning, health benefits and taxes. If you wish to attend, please return the form at right. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. If you would like kosher food, please send a note with your registration.

Pre-Retirement Conference Coupon

I will attend the PSC Pre-Retirement Conference. Enclosed is $ _____ registration fee for _____ places at $20 each.

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City ___________________  State ______  Zip __________

Retirement System ________ College ________ Date of original CUNY employment ________

Make checks payable to Professional Staff Congress and return by May 24, 2004 to: Clarissa Gilbert Weiss, PSC, 25 W. 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036.
Poverty, privatization & profit

By DAVID BACON

Since 1958, July 14 has been Iraq's national day. Last year, under the occupation, it was declared a "Saddam-era holiday," and its celebration banned. Instead, occupation authorities declared, the people of Iraq should celebrate the day of the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, which is also the day the occupation began. While most Iraqis were glad to see Saddam go, prohibiting the celebration of national day is not just an insult, but a sign of the occupation's true intentions.

For many Iraqis, July 14 recalls their anti-colonial history. 1958 was the year nationalists and radicals threw out the monarchy imposed by the British after World War One. Unions were made legal for the first time. Over the next five years of relative freedom, Iraq began building a nationalized, planned economy, based on its oil wealth. Hundreds of factories were eventually built, making it the most industrialized country in the Middle East. The Iraq government organized a national healthcare system, and treated education as a right. Women were represented in professions in percentages larger than any other Middle Eastern country. Even after that government was overthrown in 1963 (a coup in which the Central Intelligence Agency played an important role), those reforms were so popular that they were continued under the Ba'athist regime that followed.

A new deepwater port was constructed on the Persian Gulf, Umm Qasr, which became a lynchpin of the economy. Raw materials were shipped in, and piers were added to ship the goods from those factories to buyers in other countries throughout the region. The port became a symbol of progress and independence.

WAR BOOTY

Today Umm Qasr has become war booty. It was one of the first ports to be turned over, not just to a private owner, but to a for- eign one. Even before US troops reached Baghdad, in Washington DC the Bush administration gave the concession for operating the port to Stevedoring Services of America, a politically-connected firm handling cargo around the world. Privatizing Umm Qasr began the transformation of the Iraqi economy — from one based on nationalization and production for an internal, domestic market, to one based on ownership by transnational corporations, sending their profits out of the country. To Iraqis, instead of a symbol of national pride, Umm Qasr now represents a new era of foreign domination.

Following the revolution of 1958, a thou- sand longshore workers labored on Umm Qasr's docks. Even in the heady days of Arab nationalism, however, they still had no guarantees for their rights and jobs. At first, subcontracting companies were allowed to hire dockers in a daily shakedown. Finally, workers rebelled. After winning recognition for their union, they demanded and won a hiring system under their control, and a daily guaranteed wage, whether or not there was a boat at the dock to load or unload.

Today, those achievements seem like a distant dream. Umm Qasr is an object lesson in the privatization of Iraq. Its fate will have a profound effect on the degree to which any future Iraqi government will be able to control the country's economy. By the same token, the jobs, the standard of living, and the labor rights of the port's dockworkers are a bellwether for the fate of hundreds of thousands of other workers in what had been state-owned enterprises throughout Iraq's economy.

The free trade ideologies of the Bush administration see the occupation of Iraq as a beachhead into the Middle East and south Asia. Their first objective is the transformation of the state-dominated economy of what was once one of the region's wealthiest countries. A free-market Iraq will then set new ground rules for the rest of the area, much as the North American Free Trade Agreement first helped to transform Mexico's economy, and then became a prototype for the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Iraq's national wealth — factories, refineries, mines, docks, and other industrial facilities — are being readied for sale to foreign buyers in other countries through- out the region. The port became a symbol of progress and independence.

Dhatar Al-Kashash, manager of Baghdad's Al Daura oil refinery, "and there's no law which permits me to lay him off. But if I put on the hat of privatization, I'll have to fire 1500 workers [of the refinery's 3000]. In America when a company lays people off, there's unemployment insurance, and they won't die from hunger. If I dismiss employees now, I'm killing them and their families." In 1967, Saddam Hussein issued a law declaring that workers in state-owned enterprises (i.e., most Iraqi workers) had no right to organize unions or bargain. On the Union
Mobilizing for a better CUNY

By BARBARA BOWEN
PSC President

May 24 is the strategic moment for a mass show of support. The CUNY Board of Trustees meets on that day at Baruch, and the PSC negotiating team has told their representatives at the bargaining table that we need more than a minimal contract. We need salary increases, restoration of Welfare Fund benefits, and funds for the kind of advances in working conditions we won in the last round. Now is the time for the membership to drive home that message.

Austerity

We’re up against Mayor Bloomberg’s labor austerity agenda. As contracts with the City and the State have begun to be settled, the Mayor has announced that he aims to hold all the City unions to terms settled with CUNY and the State have begun to be settled, the Mayor has announced that he aims to hold all the City unions to terms settled with

1. Numbers are everything. As academics, we’re especially susceptible to the fantasy that the side with the superior arguments and data must prevail. If that’s true anywhere, it’s true in collective bargaining. Contracts are won not by argument but by pressure. No matter how eloquent, passionate and prepared we are at the bargaining table – and we are all of these – what speaks is raw power. The pressure you have brought this spring through petitions, phone calls and faxes has made a palpable difference; now we need to intensify that with the rally. Crude as it may sound, CUNY management will be out there counting numbers at the rally; they will assess how serious we are by how many people appear.

2. We need to show the urgency of increased Welfare Fund contributions.

After salaries, restoration of Welfare Fund benefits is members’ number one priority. We’ve made it clear at the bargaining table that the WF has to be restored and that the cost of restorations cannot come out of our salary increases – it must be over and above the salary offer. May 24 is our chance to show management how important this issue is to us. Union members have collected thousands of signatures on petitions demanding WF restorations; the petitions will be presented as part of the event. Bring copies of your dental bills, too; and we’ll paste them on placards for display. (Remember, the WF is entirely funded by contributions from CUNY as the employer, not by union dues – and CUNY’s contributions have failed to keep pace with costs.)

3. We’re also fighting for advances in equity and working conditions. A hallmark of the current PSC leadership is the belief that the contract can be an instrument of structural change in the workplace. That proved to be true in the last round of bargaining, when ours was the only contract among City unions to include systemic increases for equity and breakthroughs in working conditions. Along with salary and Welfare Fund increases, we won a semester of reassigned time for junior faculty, office hours for thousands of adjuncts, professional development money for staff, and several other advances. CUNY had never had such provisions before, and the University is already changed by them. It’s that important. To win the contract we need to, take annual leave time or rearrange your schedule in order to be there. It’s that important. To win the contract we need means breaking through the politics of labor austerity, contesting the view that our students deserve less because they are not rich, asserting that CUNY should not be a public good, tuition waivers, seniority, representation on PSC,” May 24 at 3:30 pm, on East 25th Street between Lexington and Third Aves. For more information, call 212-354-1352.

PSC members rallied outside a bargaining session to send a message to CUNY negotiators, who were meeting inside with PSC representatives on April 28.
OUR HISTORY

Brown v. Board and higher education

By ROSCOE C. BROWN, JR.

F ew things have changed the United States more than the historic May 17, 1954 United States Supreme Court 9-0 decision, Brown v. Board of Education, that outlawed racial segregation in the nation’s public schools. While this decision occurred a half-century ago, its ramifications affected the moral and political course of the nation.

Today many are unaware that the legal history of the attack on racial segregation in education actually began in higher education. The 1938 Supreme Court decision to open the University of Missouri Law School to a black plaintiff (Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada) was the first of a series of legal challenges by the NAACP to end segregation in education. This strategy resulted in the Brown case desegregating public schools.

MAKING CHANGE

A court order for change is one thing, but enforcing it is quite another. Indeed, it wasn’t until 1970 that the southern states began to attempt to fully desegregate the primary and secondary schools, largely because of further court action.

Legal challenges to segregation in state-supported southern colleges and universities also followed in the wake of the Brown decision. Some of the key battles of the civil rights movement occurred in higher education, including James Meredith’s registration as the first black student at the University of Mississippi in 1962, and Gov. George Wallace’s failed effort to keep the University of Alabama all white in 1963.

By the 1980s most southern colleges accepted black students, and affirmative-action recruiting was common in colleges throughout the nation.

INTEGRATION

Yet the dream of racially integrated schools has not been realized. In grades K-12, there are actually more black children in racially unbalanced schools today than there were in 1954. Why is this? The main reason is that, despite laws prohibiting discrimination in housing, blacks live in neighborhoods that are predominately black, and attend schools that are predominately black. Re-segregation has occurred in schools that were previously integrated because of “white flight” from those neighborhoods, and the schools black students attend are often under-funded, physically inferior, and staffed by inexperienced teachers.

Recently, many states – including New York – have been challenged in the courts to equalize funding for schools in urban, suburban and rural communities. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit in New York led the courts to rule that the State Legislature has shortchanged students in New York City, failing to provide “a sound, basic education” throughout the state.

What has happened to blacks in higher education since Brown? The picture is not rosy. A study by United for a Fair Economy found that: “At the current pace…college graduation parity [between black and white students] wouldn’t be reached until 2075, more than 200 years after the end of slavery.”

There are many reasons for this lack of progress in increasing the number of blacks in college. Among them are the inadequate elementary and secondary education that many black students receive, and the under-funding of public four-year and two-year colleges by state governments.

CUTS BREED INEQUALITY

While the affirmative action efforts of many private colleges are important, public colleges represent the main avenue for black students who are college-bound. Hence, the recent trend of states decreasing funding for public higher education and support programs disproportionately hurts black enrollment.

The decline in public funding for CUNY has occurred as more people of color have attended CUNY institutions. The downward slope in funding began three decades ago, during the City’s fiscal crisis just as the open admissions policy was being fully implemented. It is noteworthy that the 50th anniversary of Brown coincides with the 35th anniversary of open admissions. CUNY cannot fulfill the promise of Brown or of open admissions without adequate funding. But since the fiscal crisis of the 70s, the picture has only gotten worse: since 1990, State and City support for CUNY have dropped by 40%, Policy changes on remediation have also moved us in the wrong direction.

The challenge for CUNY and for all of higher education is to resist the concept that higher education is only for those who have received a quality education in K-12 schooling and are now ready to participate in “higher learning.” It is imperative that the City and State provide adequate funding for educational support programs so that more students of color can complete their education.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Adequate funding for the community colleges is particularly important. These colleges are often the path to a degree for students who may not have expected to go to college. Community colleges should not get second-class treatment.

Like the Civil War that ended slavery and the 19th Amendment to the Constitution granting women the right to vote, the Brown v. Board decision epitomized the country’s basic commitment to equality and equal treatment. On the 50th anniversary of the decision, we must ask what is being done to honor that commitment.

Today a college degree is as necessary for economic progress as a high school degree was in 1954. All participants in higher education – students, faculty, administrators, development officers, academic planners and legislators – must re-double their collective efforts so that the promise of Brown to provide equal educational opportunity will be realized. The challenge is ours.

Roscoe C. Brown, Jr. is director of the Center for Urban Education Policy at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Professional Staff Congress/CUNY
25 West 43rd Street
New York, New York 10036

The City and State budgets are being debated at City Hall and in Albany and cuts to CUNY’s budget are once again proposed. But you can help turn that around. Go to the PSC Web site (psc-cuny.org) and click on ACT NOW. There you can send a fax to your representatives and tell them that CUNY needs more funding, not more cuts. It’s easy to do. And we’ve shown that it works. Already this year, the Mayor dropped his proposed $5.4 million mid-year cut to CUNY after a wave of hundreds of faxes from PSC members. So log on now – your voice needs to be heard.

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ACT NOW to protect CUNY