CUNY will have its first large-scale program for graduate tuition remission under a plan announced by the Graduate Center. The PSC has been pushing for tuition remission in Albany and at CUNY for the past three years. Above left, Patricia Mainardi, professor of art history at the Graduate Center, with Emily Caglayan, graduate teaching fellow.

NEW PLAN FOR GRAD TUITION

AFTER 3 YEARS OF PSC ACTION

PSC lobbying has resulted in legislation for a new benefit for CUNY faculty and staff, which will save you money on your taxes.

TRANSPORT

Transit benefit passes NY legislature

PSC lobbying has resulted in legislation for a new benefit for CUNY faculty and staff, which will save you money on your taxes.

CONTRACT

Meet the PSC negotiating team

The PSC bargaining team has begun talks with CUNY for the next contract. The negotiators discuss the key issues in this round.

WASHINGTON

The Higher Education Act will affect you

President Bush is seeking big changes in the way American universities are funded and regulated – where “efficiency” and “accountability” may replace quality and access.
Organizing by PSC members at the University Applications Processing Center (UAPC) was successful in blocking an attempt to assign them new responsibilities without adequate pay.

In the first week of August, employees in the UAPC's Freshman Admissions Department were told by their immediate supervisor that a special consultant was going to come in and cross-train them to do international admissions.

“We’re dedicated workers, but this was out-of-title work,” said Mary Jane Brown, an employee in Freshman Admissions and a PSC bargaining team member. “We had heard through the grapevine that this was just the tip of the iceberg. Next they would go on to train the Transfer Department and International Admissions until everyone in the three admissions departments was interchangeable. They wanted us to learn three different jobs but still be paid for just one.”

So the employees decided to take action. They wrote a letter explaining their position to Howie Kaplan, the supervisor who oversees the admissions departments, and all six workers in Freshman Admissions signed it. The next day they got the response they were hoping for—there would be no cross-training for any of the admissions departments.

**CROSS-TRAINING**

This cross-training was just one of many unilateral changes that UAPC management has tried to implement. Employees were notified that they would have to join the PSC in December. “They have tried everything from the point of view that there is no contract for us to frustrate our efforts to win a first contract. But we have refused to give in,” said Bernadine Kamwanya, a UAPC employee and PSC bargaining team member.

Management’s behavior forced the union to file several unfair labor practice charges at the NLRB, including harassment and failure to bargain in good faith.

On September 3, the PSC was notified that the NLRB had reviewed the evidence presented by the union and had decided to issue a complaint. The next step is a hearing to determine to what extent the UAPC management has violated the law.

UAPC employee Gillian Anderson summed it up this way: “Management doesn’t like the fact that the employees have to deal with union. But that’s the law, and they might as well get used to it.”
New graduate tuition scholarship plan

By PETER HOGNESS

Graduate students at CUNY have never had a large-scale tuition scholarship program — until now. The Graduate Center has announced that, starting this Fall, the full amount of in-state tuition will be paid for all Graduate Teaching Fellows (GTFs), Science Fellows and Gilleece Fellows.

While this is good news for the graduate students working in the positions, it is just a prelude to a more ambitious plan to be phased in starting in Fall 2004. Over the next five years, the number of students receiving full in-state tuition will rise to 1500, or nearly half of the 3500 full-time Ph.D. students at CUNY. The amount of money dedicated to the tuition scholarships will rise from $2 million this year to $8.2 million in 2008-2009.

The surprise announcement came after three years of sustained advocacy by the PSC.

“That’s a fabulous thing,” Patricia Mainardi, Executive Officer of the Graduate Center program in social welfare and a member of the PSC’s bargaining team. “First of all, because these folks are part-time employees teaching at the University. They’re PSC members, and they need this benefit.” But more generally, said Fabricant, “we were concerned about this as part of what is needed for a really first-rate university, as part of our vision for CUNY.”

“Graduate tuition remission enlarges the entire University,” said Barbara Bowen, the union’s president and chief negotiator. “When you have a wonderful grad student who can’t stay or can’t come here because there’s no support, that’s a real loss to CUNY. But if you have a grad student who’s not worn down by having to work two jobs in addition to graduate work, they bring a sense of excitement and support to our undergrads when they teach on the campuses.”

The $2 million for tuition remission secured through the PSC contract was used in the 2002-2003 academic year. “It made an enormous difference,” said Fabricant. “It was more money than I’ve ever seen since I became part of doctoral studies at CUNY, and you could see the effect on students’ academic work.” While the contractual funds were used up after one year, Bowen noted that the settlement “set a benchmark of support” that influenced the shape of the new package.

Kelly confirmed that last year’s $2 million and this year’s $2 million from CUNY’s central budget are intimately linked. “The number is not a coincidence,” he said. “We needed to go backwards. The $2 million that had been established through the contract formed the base, the floor for this new program.”

The PSC also fought in Albany for State funding for graduate student support, as a matter of basic equity. “Tuition remission is just the norm around the country,” noted Fabricant. “CUNY has been the singular exception. For example, SUNY gets about $29 million from the State for graduate student support. CUNY gets nothing.”

Mike Fabricant, executive officer of the Graduate Center program in social welfare

Tuition remission for Ph.D. students is standard practice in the U.S.

PROTRACTED EFFORT

It was clear that to change this would require a protracted effort. “For the past three years, the PSC has requested graduate tuition remission in its state budget lobbying materials,” said Bowen. “And we’ve made multiple trips to Albany, informing the Legislature about this issue.” This consciousness-raising is critical, she explained. “The fact that CUNY does not get funding for graduate student support is not common knowledge.”

In May, PSC activists raised this issue along with other budget issues at district meetings with state legislators in their local offices. On June 3, the union organized a trip to Albany. “We had a packed bus — senior administrators from the Grad Center, faculty and students — and had over 30 appointments on this one issue,” said Bowen. “It was unprecedented.”

Mainardi and Egan, a full professor and a grad student who are both PSC members, were among the 50 or so people who made the trip. “One of the people we met with was my State Senator, Velmanette Montgomery,” said Mainardi. “She said the issue was new for her, and her top concern in terms of CUNY was City Tech, since it’s in her district. I told her I’m talking with City Tech right now because they need a GTF from my program — and she immediately got the connection.”

Each group of grassroots lobbyists was armed with a count of the number of CUNY grad students in each legislator’s district. “I had the impression that it made a real difference to tell some of the personal stories behind this issue,” said Egan. “Several students talked about how many jobs they had to work, to pay tuition. And we were able to give a sense that CUNY students are doing interesting things, when people talked about what they’re doing in grad school.”

While legislators are beginning to support the PSC on this issue, a majority still have to be convinced. The PSC plans to continue working with legislators, and seek full State funding and parity with SUNY. “We have to continue our advocacy in Albany,” Bowen said.

The heads of doctoral programs agree. While Kasir is delighted with CUNY’s new plan, he noted that it will still leave too many students without support. “Even at the end of the five years, it still won’t be like SUNY,” he said. “There, anyone who does serve for the university gets tuition remission.”

For her part, Egan is taking the issue into the community. “I live in Inwood,” Egan, the former Belle Zeller Scholar. “We had a neighborhood forum to discuss the domestic impact of the war in Iraq, and I brought some literature on tuition remission at CUNY. This is something that the Doctoral Student Council has discussed, that it’s in part because of government spending on the war that there’s not enough available for education.” Egan said she spoke to many people that evening who were startled to learn that, unlike SUNY and other schools, CUNY does not get funds for graduate tuition support.

The continued lack of State support led both faculty and Graduate School administrators to express particular appreciation for 80th Street’s decision to implement the new program in what Kelly called “a very tough budget year.” Kelly added that support from college provosts and department chairs has been important to making the tuition remission plan a reality.

RIGHT TRACK

“I think Chancellor Goldstein and Vice Chancellor Mirrer are on the right track,” said Kasir. “CUNY is doing the right thing for its students, and it’s better for doctoral students, but a win for all because of the financial burden even with a fellowship, especially after the recent tuition increase. Kelly insisted that 80th Street has been responsive to international students’ needs; he cited a $200,000 grant to help cover the tuition increase for international grad students accepted before the tuition hike was passed, and a $6,000 increase in the two- year stipends for Science Fellows.

Mainardi said some department heads at the colleges are concerned that the new program will give them less choice in which GTFs work on their campus; Kelly called cooperation with college departments a “crucial element” for the new plan’s success. And with new students now given independence and responsibility earlier in their graduate career, Mainardi noted that graduate programs will need to do more to prepare them.

“It’s going to be rocky in the beginning, but in the end it’s going to work,” she said. “This is such an enormous change that you can’t work it out all in advance.”
With the start of a new academic year, bargaining for a new PSC contract is beginning to heat up. Clarion asked members of the PSC negotiating team for their thoughts on what lies ahead. The complete list of the PSC’s contract demands, published in the May/June Clarion, is available online at www.psc-cuny.org/ClarionMayJune03.pdf.

BARBARA BOWEN
PSC President, Chief Negotiator
Associate Professor, English, Queens & Grad Center

In this round of bargaining, CUNY is at a crossroads: will the current “CUNY renaissance” be merely partial, or will management deepen and expand it by supporting the people who make the University work? Ads in the subway with our images are fine, but the union’s demands map out a future for CUNY where renewal is profound and lasting. Healthcare is a primary issue; it’s time to stop the erosion of Welfare Fund benefits and the shift of health costs onto our backs. Part-timers this is especially acute: can CUNY countenance employing thousands of part-timers with inadequate health coverage and poverty-level wages? At every level and rank there must be continued progress on salaries; meanwhile we seek to win the routine supports for academic life — sabbaticals, family leave, tuition waivers for our children. A renaissance is great, but let’s ask management to put its money where its mouth is.

JOHN HYLAND
PSC Treasurer
Professor, Biology, LaGuardia

There’s a numbers part to contract negotiations, but there’s also a qualitative part. They’re distinct but they’re not separate. The defense and the promotion of academic professionalism has to be a focus for these negotiations because the tendency is for management to erode these qualitative aspects. Unless we’re careful there could be a de-skilling in academic work. People tend to value their work as more than just a job. But morale is still relatively low. There’s a sense that the qualitative aspects of academic life have been eroded. Their desire is to be full-fledged academics, intellectuals, but the difficulty is the heavy workload and lack of research support. We’ve listened to our members in relation to that. We intend to make that one of the core issues of the negotiations just as we did last round. And we want salaries to reflect the value we put on our work.

MARCIA NEWFIELD
PSC Vice President for Part-Time Personnel
Adjunct Lecturer, English, BMCC

As part-timers we have to make some real advances in salaries, which is always important, and on issues of workload. CUNY’s position is that they basically think that part-timers can’t have the same working conditions as people who are FT; so our struggle is exactly that. We’re also going to try to gain by defining the term “full-fledged academic.”

MICHAEL FABRICANT
PSC Vice President for Senior Colleges
Professor and Executive Officer, Ph.D. Program in Social Welfare, Grad Center

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STANLEY ARNOWITZ
PSC University-wide Officer
Distinguished Professor, Sociology and Urban Education, Grad Center

Number one, in my view, is the problem that this University has made so many changes which have gone into effect without consultation with the employees represented by the union. The union insisted on the right of the employees to bargain with the University administration over a range of University programs that impact on terms and conditions of employment. Initiating the School of Professional Studies, is one example: Then there is the issue of intellectual property — they want to share profits of patents and make intellectual property policy unilaterally on things like distance learning, without real negotiation with the union.

Also, we have to make some real advances in salaries, which is always important, and on issues of workload. We’ll win the substantial involvement from our membership.

ANNE FRIEDMAN
PSC Vice President for Community Colleges
Professor of Developmental Skills, BMCC

Another priority for this round of bargaining is resisting the University’s attempts to arrogate faculty decision-making by taking titles and functions away from us and carving the workload into so many different pieces. This is an insidious attack on our strength as workers.

STEVE LONDON
PSC First Vice President
Associate Professor, Political Science, Brooklyn

This round of bargaining will help determine which of two competing visions shapes the future of the University. The union’s vision is reflected in its bargaining demands for professional working conditions, enhanced Welfare Fund benefits, and professional autonomy, while the University’s demands are to corporatize the university, creating hierarchy and greater management control. That’s what this contract fight is about. With members’ active involvement we will prevail and that will be good for the University, and good for the students and people of New York City.

STEVE TRIMBOLI
PSC Cross-Campus Officer
Senior College Laboratory Technician, Biological Sciences, Lehman

I am looking forward to finding ways to broaden membership participation in the negotiations process to win the best contract that we deserve. While we have a great team of negotiators, I believe that it will be the members’ determination to exert pressure that will be decisive in winning a decent contract. We’ll win the contract that the members are willing to fight for.

ANDREW McINERNEY
PSC Community College Officer
Associate Professor, Mathematics and Computer Science, Bronx

This is the heavy coursework and lack of research support. We’ve listened to our members in relation to that. We intend to make that one of the core issues of the negotiations just as we did last round. And we want salaries to reflect the value we put on our work.

CECELIA McCALL
PSC Secretary
Associate Professor, English, Baruch

Contract talks get moving

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PSC Cross-Campus Officer
Senior College Laboratory Technician, Biological Sciences, Lehman

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All of the city municipal unions should stand strong against Bloomberg’s attempts to weaken the municipal labor force through demands for increased “productivity” and unwillingness to pay labor what they’re worth for all the work they put in.

As for the PSC, our demands are in line with what the city needs for a good strong public university.

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Class size is cut at John Jay

By PETER HOGNESS

Class sizes are starting to be reduced at John Jay College this Fall, as the result of a resolution passed by the school’s governance body last spring.

The resolution was approved by the John Jay (JJ) College Council on April 2, over the objections of college administration. It was proposed at the initiative of the school’s department chairs and Faculty Senate, with the support of the PSC chapter.

“Freshman-level classes had been capped at 45 but now are limited to 36,” said Harold Sullivan, chair of the political science department and head of JJ’s council of department chairs. “The new limit was supposed to be 36, but we are prepared to be flexible because the resolution was just passed last spring.”

Sophomore-level core English and history classes have dropped from 44 to 38.

“At John Jay class size has been getting worse for a number of years,” said Karen Kaplowitz, president of JJ’s Faculty Senate and a member of the PSC chapter’s health and safety committee. “We have the lowest amount of space per FTE student within CUNY, and it’s less per FTE. We had 12,500 students last year, in two buildings that are supposed to have about half that many.”

JJ College Council moves to lower limits

“The overcrowding contributes to very difficult conditions,” said Cohen. “You often have students who are unable to pay attention, because they’re breathing stale air in an unventilated classroom that’s 85 degrees.”

During final exams last December, measurements by chapter members Francis Sheehan and Jerry Markowitz joined PSC Health and Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum found excess CO2 in classrooms in JJ’s North Hall. “Particularly when combined with overheating, as was the case at John Jay last winter, excess CO2 really leads to difficulty in concentration,” Greenbaum said.

“We are tremendously overcrowded,” said Karen Kaplowitz, president of JJ’s Faculty Senate and a member of the PSC chapter’s health and safety committee. “We have the lowest amount of space per FTE student within CUNY, and it’s less per FTE. We had 12,500 students last year, in two buildings that are supposed to have about half that many.”

FIRE SAFETY

Fire safety is an even more serious problem. Kaplowitz told Clarion that several fire safety problems in JJ’s North Hall were identified in a report to college administration in the Spring by the Dormitory Authority of the State of NY (DASNY), which is responsible for construction and renovation work at CUNY.

Extensive renovations are already underway, both to create fire-resistant “safe areas” and to improve emergency exit routes. “The administration is taking it very seriously,” Kaplowitz said, but she noted that reducing overcrowding had to be part of the solution. (The class size resolution also offers incentives for faculty and students to teach or take classes at off-peak times.)

The resolution on class size was discussed in February and March by the college’s Council of Chairs and Faculty Senate, and then brought to JJ’s primary governing body, the College Council, where it passed overwhelmingly in April.

“It passed over the objections of the administration,” Sullivan said.

“The president asserted that the College Council didn’t have the right to set policy on class size, but we basically won on that question.” After the resolution was passed, JJ administration asked CUNY central administration to nullify it — but 80th Street declined to do so.

“There were consultations with the central office regarding the legal issues involved,” confirmed JJ Provost Basil Wilson. He said 80th Street had not ruled on the resolution. “Who is responsible for determining class size, I don’t think that’s a resolved issue.”

Faculty leaders disagreed. “The College Council is the democratically elected legislative body of this College,” said Cohen. “We expect the administration to respect democratic process and established college policy.”

BMCC and 9/11 fallout

By PETER HOGNESS

Diane Simmons was teaching in Pitterman Hall on the first plane hit. After she evacuated her class from the building and told them to head north, she felt in behind three clerical workers who had been in one of the towers. “Their supervisor had instructed them not to leave,” she recalls. “You often have students who are unable to pay attention, because they’re breathing stale air in an unventilated classroom that’s 85 degrees.”

Soon after the resolution passed, “there was a series of meetings between the administration and faculty leadership and they found some common ground,” explained Ned Benton, a professor of public management and the department chair who first proposed the resolution. He characterized the JJ administration’s stance towards the Council’s authority as one of “creative ambiguity.”

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Wilson told Clarion, “Class size is a major issue in every university because it has enormous financial implications. One cannot approach class size in a sentimental way.” In the end, he said, “I think we came out with a fairly adroit position, in the sense that the College Council ruled a certain way but it did not detract from the authority of the president.”

The resolution lists maximum numbers for different types of classes, ranging from 16 to 36. These limits may be amended by vote of the College Budget Committee, it states, and they are “subject to a final determination by the president based on the college’s financial ability.” But any such changes require a series of consultations with both the College Budget Committee and the JJ Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

“We’ve all committed to continue to seek common ground,” said Benton, “and I believe we’ll continue to make progress in this way.”
The PSC at Labor Day 2003

The PSC turned out in full force for the 2003 Labor Day Parade on September 6, in support of workers’ right to Strike. “We see the Labor Day Parade as a kick-off for a year of intense union activity in the face of unfavorable economic conditions and antagonistic political forces,” said PSC Treasurer John Hyland. Parade marchers made clear that they think New York State’s Taylor Law, which prohibits strikes, unfairly limits the rights of workers. A New York State AFL-CIO task force on the Taylor Law has called for wide-ranging reforms, including: the permanent right to agency shop fees, punitive punishments for abusive employers, and an effective remedy when management refuses to bargain in good faith.

IMMIGRATION LAWS

The nationwide protest will culminate in a mass rally at Flushing Meadows Park.

Immigrant workers freedom ride

Hits NYC October 4

Thousands of people will converge on New York City on October 4 for an historic event.

The Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (IWFR), modeled on the 1960s Freedom Rides in the South for civil rights, will finish its national journey when it rolls into New York City in October. Caravans of buses are traveling cross-country from ten US cities, stopping in dozens of towns along the way to push for immigration reform.

The nationwide protest will culminate in a mass rally and festival in Queens at Flushing Meadows Park, from 11 am – 3 pm on October 4. With music, celebrities and cultural events, the giant demonstration will also be a celebration of the diversity of Queens, NYC and the nation.

Immigrant workers, living and paying taxes in the United States, deserve the rights to legalize their status, to reunify their families, to come to your campus, or want more information, e-mail Penny Lewis at pennywilhelmina@hotmail.com.) The union is also reaching out to students at campuses in Queens in particular – LaGuardia, Queens, Queensborough and York – through student clubs and other groups to mobilize for the rally.

“We work for the taxpayers,” said PSC Solidarity Committee Co-Chair Jim Perlstein, “Increasingly, they are recent immigrants or the children of recent immigrants – as are CUNY students. For the PSC to support the rights of immigrant workers is simply to support the people who employ us.”

RALLIES

The nationwide protest will culminate in a mass rally at Flushing Meadows Park.

Rallies leading up to the final event are planned throughout the city. These include a march across the Brooklyn Bridge to City Hall on September 24 at 11 am, and a Manhattan march from Washington Heights to Harlem on September 27 at 1 pm. (For more information, go to www.iwfr.org.)

New York union and immigrant rights activists are using the mobilization to push for two City Council bills that remove barriers to immigrants’ access to City services. Intro 326 – dubbed the “Access Without Fear Bill” – will establish a general confidentiality policy for City agencies, so that individuals seeking city services will not have to provide information (such as immigration status) not required by federal law. The bill will also make it easier for immigrants to report crimes, said Council member Hiram Monserrate, a former police officer who is the bill’s main sponsor.

Intro 38A would require translation of benefits materials at City agencies into Arabic, Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian and Spanish. According to Margie McHugh, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition, many other U.S. cities are doing even more than these bills propose to ensure access to services for immigrants. “It’s absolutely outrageous and unfair that we have policies that lag behind the rest of the country,” she said.

The Council is currently negotiating with Mayor Michael Bloomberg over the details of the two bills.
The reverse is a pull-out poster.
Labor Goes to the Movies

The PSC is proud to announce the third year of its film series. The series is designed as a forum for discussion of contemporary issues facing labor and the union movement and to strengthen ties across the labor movement in New York City. Each screening will feature a PSC member and special guests—including outside academics, filmmakers, union activists and other workers.

**OCT. 17 – BATTLE OF ALGIERS**

*(Gillo Pontecorvo, 1965)*

Algerian rebels fight for independence from French rule in this gritty and remarkably realistic documentary-style film. The guerillas expand their assault into the casbah, while the French attempt to crush the growing movement. Amateur actors as well as pioneering hand-held camera scenes make war more real for some. There aren’t simple heroes and bad guys; the colonizers are smartly portrayed and the rebels use some of the master’s tools. The contemporary resonance of the story of a major imperial power fighting to hang onto its receding empire in the Middle East should not be missed.

**SEPT. 12 – ALIEN**

*(Ridley Scott, 1979)*

A buffed Sigourney Weaver works for a commercial mining operation in outer space. Her spaceship responds to an unidentified signal and discovers signs of life. The alien turns out to be considerably less cuddly than E.T., but Weaver also must contend with a contract that rigidly prioritizes the “scientific” goal of the mission over the health and safety, and the very existence, of the workers/crew. A volatile mélange of gender politics, critical science and contract labor.

**NOV. 14 – HARLAN COUNTY, U.S.A.**

*(Barbara Kopple, 1976)*

How did she make this film? Kopple’s *Harlan County, U.S.A.* ranks as one of the most political and dynamic films produced in the United States. This documentary about labor struggle and relations, a chronicle of striking miners from rural Kentucky, includes incendiary shots of violence and confrontation as well as moments of solidarity and heroism. You will be drawn into a forgotten, working-class part of America, and experience revealing and contrasting sequences of stockholders’ meetings, police lines and strikebreakers in action.

**JAN. 24 (1:00 PM) – 1900**

*(Bernardo Bertolucci, 1976)*

What better way to spend a winter afternoon (and evening!) than watching Bertolucci’s tragic epic? 1900 stars Gerard Depardieu and Robert DeNiro as childhood friends, peasant and landlord born on the same day in 1900, and raised as near-brothers on opposite sides of Italy’s class struggle. This materialist film traces the modern history of Italy as the two friends live out their respective destinies, which are always, as Bertolucci declared in his earlier masterpiece, “before the revolution.” The superb international cast, extraordinary cinematography, and political sweep distinguish 1900 from other historical sagas. Considered a masterpiece by some, a flawed overreach by others, 1900 is one of the great films of the 20th century.

A special Saturday screening.
While a consistent supporter of progressive causes, Chaplin’s brilliance rested on his own presentation of self as outsider, marked by gait, attire, size in his image, by solitude in his personal and professional aspirations in his stories. Even in this corrosive and penetrating critique of mass production, Chaplin’s alienation finds no surcease in group solidarity, but no one has excelled him in indicting the violence attending the removal of creativity from the workplace. His own work, of course, represented the antithesis of industrial filmmaking.

A documentary produced in 1970 by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers recounts the actions of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM). Following the Detroit uprising of 1967, radical black activists and autoworkers began protesting racist conditions at Chrysler’s Dodge factory that assigned them the most dangerous and onerous work and denied them access to more desirable jobs. After a wildcat strike led by DRUM in May 1968, Revolutionary Union Movements spread to other plants and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers was formed to serve as a central organization to coordinate the radical union organizing.

Vega’s daring film examines the sexism of the triple shift of Cuban women in the years following the revolution. Teresa is a textile worker, mother and wife, and (apropos our film series) a participant in her factory’s cultural program. Putting in long hours at work and at dance rehearsals, Teresa comes home to a husband expecting her full-time attention to traditional domestic duties and unquestioned acceptance of traditional masculine prerogatives. In addition, the film broaches the persistence of class difference in revolutionary Cuba. This volatile film unleashed great controversy where it was released.

Shot in a Detroit factory when they were still churning out Checker cabs, the film traces the fate of three workers who rob their union. Though the robbery is a disaster, the thieves do make off with the cooked books of the union. The union pursues the burglars with stunning unscrupulousness as the FBI seeks informers to rat on the union. While the anti-union politics of the film are in many ways deplorable, the film demonstrates the explosiveness of racial tensions among the three friends (Richard Pryor, Yaphet Kotto and Harvey Keitel) when cynically manipulated by the union.

All screenings take place at CCNY Center for Worker Education 99 Hudson Street, Manhattan 6 PM (unless indicated) $2 suggested donation
Space is limited! Please come early.

A selection of films made by PSC members, some of whom will be present.
The reverse is a pull-out poster.
Albany update

Transit benefit for CUNY

By EILEEN MORAN

PSC pressure in Albany paid off this summer, when a bill allowing CUNY employees to take pre-tax deductions for transit benefits passed the Legislature. Meanwhile, bills on unemployment insurance for part-time faculty were still being considered.

The transit legislation, signed in August, authorizes CUNY to offer a transit fringe benefit program that allows employees to use up to $100 per month of pre-tax dollars to pay for mass transit. The money deducted from your pay, up to a maximum of $1200 per year, is exempt from Medicare taxes. Thus, your taxes are reduced and the savings are in your paycheck. The money deducted from your pay, up to a maximum of $1200 per year, is exempt from Medicare taxes. Thus, your taxes are reduced and the savings are in your paycheck.

The Senate and Assembly Labor Committees will be considering bills (A 8390 in the Assembly & S 3047 in the Senate) that would enable part-time instructional faculty who do not teach in the summer to collect unemployment insurance. Current law is inadequate because those who receive letters that indicate CUNY’s “intention” to employ them in the next semester are usually considered to have “reasonable assurance” of employment and thus are deemed ineligible for unemployment insurance during the intervening period. But as Marcia Newfield, PSC Vice-President for Part-Time Personnel, notes, “Adjuncts who receive these ‘offers’ are frequently not given courses to teach for a variety of reasons, including budget cuts by CUNY in response to underfunding by the State.”

Diane Menna, an adjunct at Queens College and PSC Officer for Part-Time Personnel, urges members “to call, e-mail and better yet to visit your state representatives this Fall” to ensure that they support expanding unemployment insurance to cover part-time faculty. District visits are being organized; contact Eileen Moran (eyedon@earthlink.net) or 718-631-3201 if you are willing to meet with your legislator at the neighborhood district office.

LABOR IN BRIEF

LIU faculty win contract

As Clarion went to press, faculty at Long Island University’s Brooklyn campus settled their six-day strike, winning a contract with gains in salary and benefits and reductions in workload. Faculty at LIU’s C.W. Post campus, who are in a separate local, remained on strike.

The workload for full-time faculty will be capped at three courses per semester, down from a maximum of four, starting next year. Part-timers will get a 2% salary increase each year. LIU refused to provide increased health benefits or a seniority system for part-time faculty, but did agree to pay into a new trust fund for adjunct benefits.

Block the Labor Department’s proposed expansion of exemptions to overtime pay under the 1989 Fair Labor Standards Act. The Act established the 40-hour work week and time-and-a-half pay for time worked over 40 hours. However, last July the House voted 213-210 to support the rules, which will take effect if Congress does not vote to stop them.

The Bush proposal – which would not change provisions in union contracts – would exempt many workers from overtime through job reclassification. The Economic Policy Institute says that more than 8 million workers could lose the right to overtime pay.

Verizon settlement

Verizon workers reached an agreement on a five-year contract in early September. Workers maintained job security guarantees for current employees, but these provisions will not cover the company’s new hires. Workers agreed to a one-time payment of 3% in the first year with no increase in base pay, plus 2% salary increases in each of the next four years. The new contract will extend the provision that unionized workers or retirees not pay premiums for health coverage, though spouses of some workers will now have to pay a premium.
New life insurance program

By TOM GERM

The PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund is changing to a new term life insurance program offered through the PSC’s state affiliate, NYSUT. Members who have had term life insurance through the Fund must decide by October 15 whether they want to transfer their current term life benefit. Employees hired on or after July 1, 2003, are being offered the new plan when they are hired.

Those who have been receiving a term life insurance benefit may transfer their current coverage to the NYSUT plan. In a valuable offer to current WF members, NYSUT has agreed to a one-time transfer of current term life coverage without asking any medical questions. The transfer offer with no medical underwriting requirement is for the current basic “free” coverage (the value of which declines from $50,000 at age 40 to $5,000 at age 65) and up to $100,000 of their optional contributory coverage. Additional amounts that a member wants to transfer or purchase, up to a total of $500,000, are subject to medical underwriting. Members will be responsible for paying premiums (at very competitive rates) on their total term life coverage.

October 15 deadline

The change in plans was prompted by a need to save money in the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund because of the increasing cost of prescription drugs and other benefits. “Not only will the Fund save $800,000 annually, but for the vast majority of our membership these changes are a benefit enhancement,” said Steve London, PSC First Vice President and WP Executive Officer.

NEW RULES

Unlike the old program, which was based on employment status, the new plan allows members to continue life insurance coverage even after they retire or leave their jobs at CUNY.

New Welfare Fund members (joining the payroll on or after July 1, 2003) will now be offered a free one-year $50,000 term life insurance policy with no medical underwriting required. After the first year this plan can be renewed, with the premium paid by the member. Up to $450,000 of additional coverage may be purchased at competitive rates by the member and dependents. Newly hired adjuncts and continuing education teachers who establish eligibility (which requires being on the payroll for three consecutive pay periods) will receive this free one-year policy. If part-timers leave CUNY employment before the end of the year, they will continue to receive the free plan for one full year and may renew their policy by paying premiums and joining the PSC as associate members.

For both current Welfare Fund members and new hires, the NYSUT Term Life plan is age-based. The amount of term life insurance is stepped down by half at age 65 and ends at age 70. However, members may transfer to the NYSUT Senior Term Life program at age 65 or after. (You cannot have both Term Life and Senior Life concurrently.) NYSUT Senior Life provides up to $30,000 of term life insurance until age 70 and then decreases until it ends at age 85. For current WF members, the Fund has negotiated special arrangements with NYSUT to deal with the transition. Those aged 65 to 69 who transfer to the standard NYSUT plan can continue the full amount of their transferred coverage up to age 70, and can then apply for NYSUT Senior Life. Those over 70 have a choice of going into NYSUT Senior Life (which they can continue regardless of employment status), or keeping all or part of their transferred amount until they retire.

Both of these groups are exempt from the step-down provisions of the regular term life plan.

Coverage that can continue after retirement

For WF members hired before July 1, 2003, the old life insurance plan ends at midnight on October 31, 2003 and the new plan takes effect November 1, 2003. For members transferring coverage from the old plan, enrollment in the new plan must be completed by October 15, 2003. After that date, you will lose the opportunity to transfer your current plan and optional coverage without answering any medical questions.

For further information on the changes, call the administrator of the benefit, Massh Affinity Group Services, at (888) 38-NYSUT (386-9788). Or call the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund at 212-354-5200.

DEADLINES

For WF members hired before July 1, 2003, the old life insurance plan ends at midnight on October 31, 2003 and the new plan takes effect November 1, 2003. For members transferring coverage from the old plan, enrollment in the new plan must be completed by October 15, 2003. After that date, you will lose the opportunity to transfer your current plan and optional coverage without answering any medical questions.

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Library cards for CUNY’s retirees

Getting the cards can be a little complicated, but we’ll try to make it as straightforward as possible.

How to get one for yourself

■ Get a letter from your department or office signed by a chair or supervisor, verifying that you were employed there and that you have retired.

■ Call your college’s library and ID office to find out what hours it is open. When you go there, make sure

■ Your rights

be made to allow you to borrow books. Ask for written acknowledgement that this has occurred.

The ID/library card will most likely be sent to you by mail. When you go to the ID card office, ask them when and how you will receive your card.

You’re set! The first time you use the card for borrowing privileges, bring the acknowledgement letter from the chief librarian with you just in case.

Renewals of your ID/library card should follow college rules, such as procedures for getting an annual sticker. You should check with your former department or office about renewal. The college may periodically request a retiree to exchange the old card for a new one.

By CLARION STAFF

Retirees welcomed a new provision in the current PSC contract that guarantees them access to CUNY libraries. It is something that should not be difficult for CUNY to provide, but actually getting your hands on a CUNY college library card has not always been simple.

The PSC pressed for a standard university-wide procedure for issuing the cards, but CUNY management has insisted on letting each campus handle it separately. The result is that some campuses have made getting the card a snap, while others require you to jump through a couple of administrative hoops.

Here’s how to make sure that you get your card.

■ Next, call your college’s ID card office to find out what hours it is open. When you go there, make sure

■ Your rights

to bring your chair/supervisor’s letter, the president’s letter (if needed), a picture ID (such as driver’s license or passport), and your most recent picture ID from the college, if you have one.

Send a letter to the college’s chief librarian to inform them of your intent to get library privileges, and request that any necessary adjustments to the library’s computers

■ Before you show up, bring your chair/supervisor’s letter, the president’s letter (if needed), a picture ID (such as driver’s license or passport), and your most recent picture ID from the college, if you have one.

Send a letter to the college’s chief librarian to inform them of your intent to get library privileges, and request that any necessary adjustments to the library’s computers

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■ If you need it, bring your chair/supervisor’s letter, the president’s letter (if needed), a picture ID (such as driver’s license or passport), and your most recent picture ID from the college, if you have one.

Send a letter to the college’s chief librarian to inform them of your intent to get library privileges, and request that any necessary adjustments to the library’s computers

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Saturday, October 18 / 9:30-12:30 pm:
PSC International Committee meeting.
For location or other info, e-mail Tony O’Brien at jobrihen@bway.net.

Wednesday, October 22: TIAA-CREF representatives David Stetch will be at the PSC office to discuss asset allocations, advantages of a tax deferred annuity, having enough to retire, and your options to receive your TIAA-CREF retirement income. Call Linda Slioff at the PSC office to schedule an appointment: 212-354-1252.

Thursday, October 23 / 6:00 pm:
Opening reception for “Challenges to Free Speech and Academic Freedom in the Name of McCarthyism, 1931-1942.” Exhibit documents the first attempts to organize faculty and staff at City College. Describes the Birth of Teachers Union Local 5 and later College Teachers Union Local 537 (both AFT), both targeted by the Rapp-Coudert Committee. At CCNY’s Morris Raphael Cohen Library.
**Hostos health concerns**

By TOMIO GERON

“I noticed that whenever I came here I didn’t feel right,” said Carmen Alustiza-Mondesire, a counselor at Hostos Community College for three years. “I have to wash my eyes constantly.”

Alustiza-Mondesire, who works in the D (Savoy) Building at Hostos, noticed that irritation of the eyes, allergies and sickness were not uncommon in her building. “I noticed other people with very, very bad allergies,” she said. “They’d say the same thing: ‘When I’m out of school I feel fine.’”

So she notified administrators at Hostos in writing, with digital pictures, in December 2002. When that didn’t result in any changes, she notified Norma Peña de Llorenz, PSC Chapter Chair at Hostos.

“I documented what most people just complained about,” said Alustiza-Mondesire. What she documented was a serious air circulation problem — where some areas get no air while some are freezing cold – plus unbelievably dirty rugs in high-traffic areas, bathrooms routinely out of order, dangerous stairways and some areas that seemed to have never been cleaned.

Peña de Llorenz had her own concerns about the building she works in, the 560 Building, which suffers from air circulation problems and broken elevators.

After Peña de Llorenz notified Hostos management that PSC Health and Safety Officer Joan Greenbaum would be coming for a walk-through inspection in May, “for the first time in months they brought in cleaning crews to mop the floors and clean,” Peña de Llorenz told Clarion.

**HEALTH & SAFETY**

But the sudden clean-up left many areas untouched. “They were doing a little cover-up, cosmetic things,” said Peña de Llorenz. “But nothing really changed.” And Greenbaum was shocked by what she saw.

“When I’ve seen long strands of dust coiled up, hanging from the ceiling,” said Greenbaum, “They looked like a magic forest of dust coils.” She told Clarion that the dust and lack of proper building maintenance could lead to significant health effects. “Certainly people with prior allergic or breathing deficiencies or immune deficiencies are going to have difficulties in an environment with that much visible dust,” she said. “There was filth at a level I’ve never seen. Mice droppings and fleas in the carpet, on desks and chairs.”

Hostos President Dolores Fernandez acknowledged the rodent problem, and says that management is responding. “They show up in my office as well,” she said. “We are on top of it and we are trying to address it.”

But when the Hostos chapter had another walk-through in July, they did not see any substantive changes. “Faculty and staff are upset,” said Alustiza-Mondesire, who works in a high-traffic area, bathrooms routinely out of order, dangerous stairways and some areas that seemed to have never been cleaned.

Marcia Newfield (left), PSC vice president for part time personnel, joined Long Island University faculty, who went on strike in early September for higher pay and benefits and lower workload. See Labor in Brief, p. 7.

Hostos administration reports that some of the stairs in her building have recently been fixed. “That’s a good sign,” she said.

‘We have a meeting of the membership to talk about health and safety,” Halima Toure, a lecturer in the language and cognition department, has started a PSC health support group on campus to discuss medical issues, many of which can be affected by workplace conditions.

“Members are very informed at Hostos,” said Greenbaum. “They have been trying to do things about this for years. I believe the union, faculty and staff can really get this turned around in the Fall, with the active voice of so many members.”

**Health care spending account**

By CLARISSA GILBERT WEISS

If you face large out-of-pocket medical expenses, a federal program called the Health Care Flexible Spending Account (HCFS) can provide you with substantial savings – and now is the time to think about signing up.

Through an HCFA, employees can pay for eligible medical and dental expenses not covered by insurance – pre-tax dollars. The program, available to CUNY instructional staff through the City of New York, allows you to put aside between $260 and $5,000 for your spouse or eligible dependents. At Clarion press time, the date for the end of this year’s enrollment period was not set; last year it ended in mid-November.

By reducing your gross salary for federal and Social Security tax purposes, you lower your tax bill. Some one earning $50,000 a year who sets aside the maximum might save $1,500 to $1,500, depending on tax filing details. An HCFA can also help you to plan for anticipated expenses.

**EXPENSES**

An HCFA can be used to pay for deductibles, co-insurance and out-of-pocket costs for medical, dental, vision and hearing expenses. Physi- cians, psychologists’ fees, braces, pre- scription drugs, prescription glasses and contact lenses are all eligible.

“I think it’s a fabulous program,” said Nancy Romer, professor of psychology at Brooklyn College, who used the program for expenses from surgery and related treatments. “If you have a serious medical condition or know you’re facing surgery that will not be fully covered by insurance, it’s worth it to plan ahead,” she said.

To use the program, first estimate how much your medical expenses may exceed the amount you want to save with your pre-tax contribution. Your fund accumulates through automatic payroll deductions.

After you go for the treatment, you submit a claim and you will receive a reimbursement check from your account in a couple of months.

Romer pointed out two downsides to the program. “One problem is that if you don’t use it you lose it,” she said. “That is, if your medical bills are less than the amount that you have set aside in the account, the unused amount will be forfeited at the end of the year, in accordance with IRS rules.

“The other is it’s a lot of paperwork,” said Romer. “First, you have to show it’s not covered by your insur- ance,” she said. “That is, you have to apply and have it rejected. It can be frustrating, but if you’re someone that’s good on the paper trail, that will help.”

You will receive a quarterly personal account statement, detailing how much you have spent and how much is in your account. To sign up for an HCFA for calendar year 2004, you should enroll before mid-November. To obtain- forms for the exact dates for enrollment, contact your college personnel office, or contact the City of New York’s FSA Adminis- trative Office at 212-306-7760, 40 Rector Street, 3rd floor, NYC 10006 (online at nyc.gov/html/fsa).
RESURGENCE

The union’s campaign started with a vision of a regnant CUNY, coupled with an analysis – from our lived experience as faculty – of why it’s important to the entire university that graduate students be supported. Then there was budget analysis and research, behind-the-scenes negotiations, and last year a contract that produced $2 million to support graduate tuition. CUNY Administrators also probed the issue, meanwhile members of the doctoral faculty raised tuition remission in constituent visits to their own legislators, and it was incorporated into the legislative package advanced by NYSUT, the statewide education union. That meant that colleagues from SUNY and the public schools were also mentioning it in their Albany visits.

There is a similar story to be told about the transit benefit, something the union’s been working on for over a year, and about the community college tuition scholarship, where PSC research – especially about the inadequacies of TAP – formed the basis for the City Council’s program. We weren’t able to stop the tuition increase, but because we had worked closely with the City Council for the last three years, we were able to help thousands of students stay in school.

I take heart from these stories, especially in a time when nationally and internationally a far-east political agenda is passing itself off as the norm. What I learn is not that we can hope only for partial victories, but rather that persistence is portrayed as evidence of failure.

Don’t give up; press on many fronts.

MAKING CHANGE

Anatomy of a victory

By BARBARA BOWEN
PSC President

One thing I learned from the writing of CUNY professor Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick – particularly Epistemology of the Closet – is never to foreclose in advance your sense of how far a political intervention will lead. I was reminded of this while reading articles in this month’s Clarion and thinking about a string of recent victories. The New tuition remission program at the Graduate Center is on the cover, and inside are reports on a pre-tax transit benefit for CUNY employees and the effects of the $4.5 million community college scholarship fund that the union helped to design. Each of these victories had an element of indirection and even surprise, but together they remind us that it’s essential to press forward on multiple fronts, even when people believe that the result will be immediate or entirely predictable.

Take the Grad Center tuition remission. The union has made this a priority for three years, even though we sometimes felt that we were preaching in the wilderness as we first tried to make the case to Albany. Gradually, though, we gained support. By June of this year, several state senators were listening avidly to doctoral students explain their Ph.D. dissertations and pledging to allocate funds from their “member-item money” directly for this purpose. When the money came, however, it was from the Chancellor’s Office, not yet from Albany (although we continue to work with supportive legislators there).

Bush’s business model for higher education

By MARK F. SMITH

Don’t give up; press on many fronts.

The “accountability” story

By BARBARA BOWEN
PSC President

NUMBERS GAME

Graduation and retention rates are easily quantifiable, and the emphasis on them is based on a common picture of college life. Eighteen-year-old high school graduates go off to live in college dormitories, attend daytime classes, study at night, enjoy football games on weekends and, after four years, graduate with a diploma. Despite the well-documented reality that today’s students are older, working, raising families and not finishing college in the traditional 4-year span, we continue to focus on an outmoded picture. The House Education and Workforce Committee heard testimony in July that condemned US higher education because “the average 5-year institutional graduation rate is approximately 51%.” Among the lowest income college entrants, an average 40% fail to graduate.

These numbers will sound familiar to New Yorkers, who remember similar attacks that then-Mayor Rudy Giuliani launched against CUNY in the 1980s. But as Daily News columnist Juan Gonzalez pointed out in 1994, while “only 8% of an entering bachelor’s degree class in 1988 graduated after four years, 48% of the class graduated after eight years.” We should be praising the perseverance of students who continue with their studies while working full- or part-time jobs, raising families, and overcoming disadvantaged backgrounds. Instead, their persistence is portrayed as evidence of failure.

Republicans in Congress have also sought to use the theme of “accountability” to blame colleges for rising tuition costs. “Many colleges, both public and private, are not operating as efficiently as they should, and their prices reflect it,” Rep. Howard “Buck” McKeon wrote in the July 11 Chronicle of Higher Education. A House subcommittee chaired by McKeon held hearings that month which centered on his proposal to tie federal aid to a “College Affordability Index.” This would ultimately deny any institution eligibility for federal student aid funds if it raised tuition more than twice the Consumer’s Price Index. Given recent tuition increases of up to 40% in public institutions because of reduced state funding, such a proposal threatens to deny federal student aid money to many of the institutions where it is most needed.

Much of the debate at the hearing focused on problems with McKeon’s simplistic approach, and McKeon stressed that his proposal was not in final form. This pointed out the ability of his allies to rise to his defense by accurately explaining the complexities. “I was raised in a family where we never had enough to eat, but it was the only thing we were able to do,” one witness who accepted McKeon’s framework proposed turning to technology as a solution. Because “just 25 courses generate about half of all student enrollments in community colleges and about a third of enrollments in four-year institutions” a distance education package of such courses would cut costs dramatically, testified Dr. Carol Twigg, director of the Center for Academic Transformation at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Unfortunately, most studies suggest that when distance education is done properly it can cost more, not less, than traditional modes of delivery.

While this version of “accountability” has drawn little notice outside of those who closely follow higher education policy, that might change early next year. According to the Chronicle of Higher Education, “The White House is considering having Mr. Bush, as part of his re-election bid, issue a scathing critique of higher education early next year,” with a demand for “greater accountability” as the central theme. Administration strategists, the Chronicle reports, “are still trying to determine whether being tough on colleges will have popular appeal.”

FEATHERBEDDING

The question is not really accountability itself. No one is against “accountability.” The question is whether higher education should be accountable, but what this really means. Is the real problem in higher education some sort of academic featherbedding? Or are critics comparing today’s higher education with an idealized picture that does not reflect the demands of today’s reality? Given the reduction of state aid to public institutions, might the types of national restrictions now being proposed actually make the situation worse?

AAUP has supported the core structure of the HEA from its beginning, although even in 1965 we criticized the unwillingness of Congress to appropriate adequate funds. That problem continues today, and it is time to hold our legislators accountable for their failure to provide higher education with adequate support.

Mark F. Smith is the AAUP’s Director of Government Relations. For more on AAUP’s views on the HEA, visit www.aaup.org.
Michigan: one up and one down

By CECILIA McCall
PSC Secretary

A

bandoned by his father, mother dead by the time he reached thirteen, worked his way through college and today a millionaire business owner – a typical Horatio Alger rags-to riches story so much a part of American lore, and the brief biography of Ward Connerly, the self-loathing African American obsessed with ending affirmative action. Connerly boasts a racial heritage of Chocotaw Indian, Irish, French and black; however, it is his black genes that he finds troublesome. He has said, “It is difficult for me to think black as a lot of people expect me to.”

The backlash against affirmative action in higher education is intertwined with Ward Connerly’s public career. Though a beneficiary of affirmative action policies in that his minority firm benefits from federal and state set-aside contracts, he is the poster boy of the anti-affirmative action movement. In 1985, as a member of the California Board of Regents, Connerly engineered the resolution banning affirmative action in admissions in the University of California system. A year later, working with his buddy Governor Pete Wilson, he spearheaded the winning campaign for Proposition 209 that amended the California Constitution to forbid the use of race and gender as factors in state hiring, contracting and education. As a result, by 1998 African American, Chicano and Native American admissions to Berkeley had dropped by 56%.

ON THE ROAD

Connerly’s American Civil Rights Institute and its political-action committee, the American Civil Rights Coalition, took the California show on the road, supporting and funding the suits against the University of Michigan’s admissions policies for its undergraduate division and law school. The cases reached the Supreme Court, in the first challenge to affirmative action in higher education in a generation. The Court, however, surprised Connerly and many others with its long-awaited ruling this past June. In a decision that offered something to both proponents and opponents of affirmative action, the Court upheld the Michigan Law School’s admissions policy (Gunter v. Bollinger), but disallowed the undergraduate division’s system of awarding 20 of 150 points to certain minority applicants (Gratz v. Bollinger).

In the majority opinion on the latter case, Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote that the undergraduate system was too mecha-
nistic and did not give enough weight to in-
dividual differences. In the majority opinion for the law school, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor (a beneficiary of affirmative action since she was chosen for the Supreme Court in large part because of her gender) stated that it employed a “highly individualized, holistic review of each applicant’s file.” She held that the law school policy does not violate the equal-protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

BAKKE

The Court upheld Justice Lewis Powell’s position in the 1978 Bakke Case (Regents of the University of California v. Bakke), which held that while race could not be used alone, it could be weighed along with other factors if a university wanted to eliminate effects of past discrimination. The Bakke decision also held that the state has a compelling interest in diversity.

This was all too much for Justice Clarence Thomas, who wrote a dissenting opinion. Though Thomas is the grandson of a sharecropper, and twice a recipient of affirmative action (both at Yale Law School and in his appointment to the Court), his dissent again proved that he is the best friend of the downtrodden white man. “Racial discrimination is not a permissible solution to the self-inflicted wound of this elitist policy,” Thomas wrote of affirmative action. He has argued that recipients of affirmative action are forever stigmatized and suffer from feelings of insecurity as a result of being accepted into schools for which they are not qualified.

PUBLIC COLLEGES

The two new Supreme Court rulings most directly affect public, tax-supported colleges and universities, but private and prestigious colleges such as Dartmouth and Harvard that have been guided by Bakke feel that their standards will pass scrutiny. On the other hand, schools whose model has been closer to that of Michigan’s undergraduate division will have to adjust their policies.

One can’t help but wonder how CUNY will react. Since 1976 (two years before Bakke), CUNY has been steadily dismantling its open admissions program, the latest blow coming in 1988 and 1999 when the Board of Trustees voted to further restrict admissions by eliminating remediation at the senior colleges. One of the loudest voices against remediation was that of Herman Badillo, a proponent of the “bootstrap” philosophy of self-help, who was soon rewarded with the post of BoT Chair. It’s remarkable how some people of color, who have achieved a measure of success, feel the need to pull up the ladder behind them. This is what unites Connerly, Thomas and Badillo. They seem to feel that the value of their “Horatio Alger” stories is somehow threatened by social programs that attack barriers of discrimination. I therefore have a proposal for those who, like this trio, may feel tainted or guilty for having received preferential treatment: I suggest that they practice voluntary retribution and penance.

People of Connerly’s ilk who have profit-
ed from government contracts can refund the money and pledge never to accept an-
other contract. They can write check-
s to their rivals, requiring their heirs to swear an oath never to benefit from affirmative ac-

The role of Connerly, Thomas, Badillo

The PSC Officers: Barbara Brown, President; Steven London, First Vice President; Corinna McCullough, Secretary; John Hyland, Treasurer; Stanley Aronowitz, Jonathan Buchenbach, Blanche Cook, Susan O’Mal-

When Ralph Giordano can, he likes to make a quick stop at the College of Staten Island's childcare center. “The kids say, ‘Want a cookie? Want to play?’” Giordano says with a smile. “And I do admit I’ll bounce a ball and eat a cookie.”

But Giordano has managed construction work on the center’s outdoor play area, and he likes to see how it is being put to use.

Giordano, CSI’s assistant director of campus planning, is proud of his work. “All of this surface was wood,” he says, gesturing at a bench. “Kids would get splinters, hanging on it, so we replaced it with a resin material. Little things like that make the job worthwhile. When you can change the benches and then watch the kids running around.”

A Higher Education Officer and a registered architect, Giordano designed the forest green tent structure that extends out part of the play area. “We had to give them some shade,” he says. The shape was inspired by a shade structure he had seen at the NY Aquarium in Coney Island. “There’s a little cantilever, so we didn’t have to put any poles in back there,” he explains. It’s one less thing for running children to collide with. “This is where the fun stuff comes in, designing something so problems don’t show up.”

Ralph Giordano likes to see happy kids, but that is not the only reason this project has meant a lot to him. “I know that every single child in here, they have a parent who is in the classroom and is able to get an education because of this,” he says.

**MOVING**

Probably the biggest project Giordano’s been involved in was CSI’s move to its current 204-acre campus, on the site of the defunct Willowbrook State School. It was a massive undertaking. Not only did it require renovating old buildings and building new ones, it also meant moving all the furniture, equipment and disoriented faculty, staff and students to the current site. The whole process ran from about 1986 to 1995, and the final move took two years.

It was quite confusing the first year, Giordano recalls, but now we can laugh about it. It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime experiences.”

Giordano stands inside the 2M Building, a massive structure built in 1929 that once housed CSI’s maintenance department. Previously scheduled to be demolished, the building is now being renovated as part of the department and the energy efficiency of the future campus or office use — which will help with CSI’s overcrowding problem.

Inside, it is vast and open. Giordano casts a haughty eye at some boxes stacked six feet high. “Unfortunately, most of my life is this stuff. Papers and forms, documents and shop drawings. Papers that we never know whether we’ll get around to using.”

Sometimes Giordano gets to spend an afternoon at the drafting board, knocking out some drawings. “That doesn’t happen as much as I’d like to,” he says. “A lot of the typical day is creating work orders, purchase requests. Finding out why something didn’t get ordered.”

But a basic part of his job is also getting out “on site,” as they call it in construction. “If I have projects going on, if I have people actively working, I’ll usually work by on my way in,” he explains. Staying on top of a project means talking with people, seeing how things are going, and he clearly enjoys this part of his work.

Giordano gets around the sprawling campus in a converted golf cart. Today, on the way back from the 2M Building, he pulls over to speak to Jason Fein and Corey Shapiro, two HEOS who work in the recreation center. “I heard you had a visit from the EPA,” says Giordano. “Apparently we have a violation.” “They talk about the problem, and Giordano tells them it should be easy to fix.

**DEDUCTIONS**

Fein tells this reporter that when he first started at CSI, he thought the deductions from his check automatically made him an member of the union. “I had no idea I had to fill out that little card,” he said — until Giordano told him.

It is much the way that Giordano got help when he started working at CSI 19 years ago. “When I first started here, the union people took care of me,” he says. Giordano remembers how Ken Klindtworth, director of campus planning and a union member, explained everything to him about CUNY and the union. “The very first day,” recalls Giordano, “he led me through the forms: ‘Check that box, do this, do that.’ He told me about the route to 33.9, ‘HEO tenure.’"

It was important advice, says Giordano. “When you first come in, the last thing you think about is ten years from now.”

The help that Klindtworth gave Giordano then is part of what inspires Giordano to be involved with the union today. “I guess I owe something back,” he says.

Giordano recently decided to become more active in the union, and when you ask him why, his first response may come as a surprise. “A lot of it is what’s currently going on in the world,” he explains. “I’ve gotten very political in the last couple of years, especially having two children of draft age. I don’t want to see them die.”

And then there are the problems at CSI that he sees every day that he wants to change, which led him to serve on CSI’s new HEO Labor-Management Committee. He’s glad he’s heard the word “HEO” more often than in the past. “There are some changes happening,” Giordano says. “It’s in writing, and it’s in the contract and it’s good stuff. People realize the union is not just faculty, it’s also HEOs and CLTs.”

Health and safety issues affect both his union role and his professional life, and he plans to get a master’s in environmental health at Hunter. It will be his second master’s degree.

Giordano got an M.A. in history at CSI ten years ago; in addition to his job as a HEO, he is also an adjunct faculty member there, teaching classes in history and American studies. In October, he’ll see his first book published: Fun and Games in Twentieth-Century America: A Historical Guide to Leisure (Greenwood) is a decade-by-decade examination of leisure activities and the social conditions that shaped them.

**SWING AND COUNTRY**

Giordano combines his academic interests with some of his personal passions. He is a fervent music fan, especially of swing and country, and goes with his wife to hear live music almost every week.

Growing up, “there was always music in my house,” he recalls. He remembers working in his parents’ dress shop and always hearing the sultry sounds of Sinatra, Dean Martin and Tony Bennett on the radio.

There was an uncle who worked for Buddy Holly.

This fall Giordano is presenting a paper at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association on censorship of the pop country band, the Dixie Chicks — their song “Goodbye Earl” and the reaction against it.

“It’s about domestic violence,” Giordano explains, “and 45% of country music radio stations banned it.” His paper analyzes public perceptions of the band, and differences in the reactions to male and female artists who address this topic.

Giordano’s son Matt, a senior at St. John’s, works in the CSI bookstore. On his way to have lunch at the school café, Giordano stops by to say hello. “How was Metallica?” Giordano says.

“Good,” Matt says, deadpan. He wears an orange T-shirt and khakis. “Talk to you tonight!” the father says.

“This turns out to have been an exchange between academic colleagues. Though he doesn’t look it, Matt is excited because he is about to get published, Giordano says.

Matt and Ralph have collaborated on a paper on the “zoot suit riots” of the 1940s that will be published in a forthcoming book on youth subcultures.

Matt, a communications major and music fan, is thinking about a career in journalism. “I’m trying to convince him to get his Ph.D.,” says Ralph, and that zoot suit article interested them both. “The editor was looking for a combination of a faculty member and an undergraduate,” he says. “When I indicated it would be myself and my son, she got excited because it was something she’d never expected.”

Ralph and Matt met weekly over the summer to work on the project, and Ralph says “it’s scary” how similar their notes were on some of the things they both read. The work has gone well, he says, and they’re planning to go together to the Midwest Language Modern Association conference in Chicago this November, where Giordano is presenting.

But the two colleagues still interact as father and son. “He’s going to see Pearl Jam tonight. He didn’t invite me!” Giordano says, mock-incredulously. Apparently, collaboratively, it has its limits.

**15-MINUTE ACTIVIST**

**Meet and greet**

This Fall, many new faculty and many new staff are starting jobs at CUNY. This month, take a few minutes from the breakneck pace of the beginning of the semester and introduce yourself to a new colleague. Make sure they know we have a union, and encourage them to sign a card. If they haven’t received a copy of Clarion, pass yours on to them. Starting a new job can be daunting and there is a lot of information to process, so your new colleagues will appreciate the personal connection. Say hello, and help the union grow.

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**A registered architect also teaches American history and popular culture at CSI.**

Ralph Giordano, assistant director of campus planning, at the CSI children’s center playground, which he helped design.

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**A Higher Education Officer and a registered architect, Giordano designed the forest green tent structure that extends out part of the play area.**

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**FEATUE**

**Buildings, history & Dixie Chicks**

A life in the day of Ralph Giordano