



Joe Putrock

105,453 POSTCARDS!

TAKING IT TO ALBANY

The State budget is expected to be finalized soon. The PSC brought 105,453 postcards to Albany on April 14 to protest Governor Pataki's proposed budget cuts and tuition hikes. On May 3, it's your turn, at a huge Albany rally for pub-

lic education. With buses coming from all over the state, organizers expect it to be the biggest protest Albany has ever seen. Find out how you can sign up for a seat on the bus. **SEE PAGES 6-7**

YOUR RIGHTS

Dept. chairs & summer pay

Under the contract, department chairs are entitled to pay for work done during the summer. Is this provision implemented correctly on your campus? **PAGE 5**

HEALTH & SAFETY

RSI – Repetitive Strain Illness

It's the leading cause of health problems in the US workplace today and there are no national guidelines for safety. But you can take steps to help prevent it. **PAGE 9**

CULTURE

Strummer in the struggle

Former Clash guitarist Joe Strummer, 50, recently died. He could do more than play the guitar – he was an ardent supporter of labor rights in Britain. **PAGE 9**



NEXT CONTRACT

Mass meeting set for May 12

PSC members can discuss the new contract demands. **PAGE 5**

PSC-CUNY Grants

Committee on faculty research funds

The PSC-CUNY Research Award Program needs faculty members to help distribute grants in their area of expertise. Interested full-time faculty can volunteer or nominate colleagues to join the University Committee on Research Awards (UCRA); those who serve on the UCRA will help form grant review panels, establish grant guidelines and select recipients. The deadline for nominations is **May 12**.

MANY AREAS

The UCRA is looking for people to coordinate each of the following ar-

reas: art history and visual arts; comparative literature and languages; computer science; education; health and human services; health sciences; psychology and physiological psychology; sociology. Applicants are recommended by the University Faculty Senate Committee on Research and appointed by the Chancellor. An in-service allotment is provided for service on the UCRA (\$6,000 over three years of service).

For more information call Stasia Pasela in the UFS office at 212-794-5538 or e-mail her at Stasia.Pasela@mail.cuny.edu.



The PSC joined the New York Public Library Guild (AFSCME Local 1930) in April at a rally against layoffs at City libraries. At center is Local 1930 President Ray Markey.

CUNY IN BRIEF

CUNY law school case settled

Maivân Lãm, a former faculty member at the CUNY School of Law, has settled the grievance she filed over the law school's refusal to grant her tenure. The agreement gives Lãm, an expert in international law, promotion and tenure in a post at the CUNY Graduate Center, where she will serve as associate director of the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies. Lãm's case was the subject of protests by students at the law school during the 2000-01 academic year. "I feel very very good about it indeed and I feel very grateful to the people who were of immense support for me throughout, including students at the law school, PSC grievance counselor Howard Prince and my wonderful lawyer Deborah Karpatkin," said Lãm.

LaGuardia CC in top five for Latino grads

LaGuardia Community College was named as one of the top five community colleges in the nation in the number of associate degrees granted to Latinos. LaGuardia was the only college in the Northeast in the top ten of the list compiled by "Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education." Latino high school graduates have the second highest college enrollment rate of any major ethnic group, but they trail other groups in earning undergraduate degrees.

Schmidt named Board of Trustees Chair

Benno C. Schmidt, Jr., the vice chair and acting chair of the CUNY Board of Trustees, was named as the permanent chair of the Trustees by Governor George Pataki in April. Schmidt, a Trustee since 1999, has been acting chair since Herman Badillo resigned to run for mayor. In appointing Schmidt, Pataki praised him for his leadership at CUNY and his work on former mayor Giuliani's task force, which called CUNY "an institution adrift." Schmidt, the former president of Yale University, is also the chair of Edison Schools, Inc., a for-profit company, that is a leading group in privatizing public schools nationwide. In accepting Pataki's appointment, Schmidt said that he was honored to be part of "this historic turnaround" at CUNY.

Correction

The March *Clarion* mistakenly identified LaGuardia student Yasser Hussain as a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Hussain is in fact a member of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society of the two-year college; all Phi Beta Kappa chapters are located at senior colleges.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 25 W. 43RD STREET, FIFTH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10036.
E-MAIL: PHOGNESS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: 212-302-7815.

How to solve State budget crisis

Both Republican and Democratic state legislators, as well as the media, constantly talk about the state's \$11.5 billion revenue shortfall as if it were a condition beyond anyone's control. They talk about the shortfall as if it were an act of nature, like a drought. The only remedies, most legislators say, are borrowing and cutting services. No one is willing to mention that since 1994, Governor Pataki has pushed through tax cuts that will reduce State revenues by \$13.5 billion in 2003-2004. If our state officials would simply scale back these tax cuts, which favor the wealthy, there would be no need for borrowing – and there would be money for the public schools, hospitals, libraries, parks, environmental protection, and for SUNY and CUNY.

Bill Crain
City College

QCC views on the war

The article entitled "Antiwar views gain strength in labor" does not accurately represent what occurred at Queensborough Community College via our e-mail ballot on the issue of the US Labor Against the War (USLAW) resolution. The e-mail poll was sent to over 600 individuals, but only 30 responses were received (a 5% return rate). While it is correct to state that "most comments ran against PSC support..." (there were 12 for and 18 against), the very small number of returns should have been mentioned in the article. We made a point of saying this at the Delegate Assembly. We feel that no conclusion can be drawn as to what the chapter as a whole might

take as a position, based on such a small response. It should also be noted that previous e-mail and department pollings on similar issues have been thoroughly mixed at QCC.

Additionally, the article says that QCC was the only chapter where comments ran against USLAW. Among those chapters reporting at the DA, QCC was the only one where this occurred. Several chapters did not report and thus their responses are unknown.

Jay Appleman, QCC Chapter Chair
Phil Pecorino, QCC Vice-Chair

Editor's note: *It's one of the constant frustrations of journalism that there is never enough room for every relevant detail. We stand by the accuracy of our reporting, but are glad to publish Appleman and Pecorino's letter that provides some additional context.*

At the January Delegate Assembly, chapters were asked to discuss the USLAW resolution and report back to the February DA, where a vote would be held. In chapter meetings at BMCC, BxCC, Brooklyn, CCNY, COSI, City Tech, Queens and York and in an online discussion at LaGuardia, member comments strongly supported the USLAW resolution. QCC's online comments are described above; the union's other chapters did not organize discussions.

Connect the dots

I am involved in several PSC committees, and with hundreds of my colleagues have attended anti-war protests, CUNY support demonstrations and lobbying activities.

Most PSC members connect the dots: billions for unending "preemptive wars" (Iraq is only the first), tax breaks for the wealthy, assaults on civil liberties and the economy, the enormous toll that a war budget takes on our public institutions, and management of the news by the Bush administration.

A few of us serve on PSC's International Committee and are trying to put together a curriculum on the war. I know that many of my colleagues have connected the dots in their classrooms. Have any of you talked in your classrooms about the campaign to bring a Uniting for Peace Resolution before the UN's General Assembly (greenpeace.org)? Do you know about Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich's Resolution 20, which would deprive Bush of his ability to wage war? Do you have useful Web sites, articles or curriculum ideas you can share?

If you'd like to help create and distribute a curriculum on war, peace and justice, please contact the PSC International Committee by e-mail (miriam_thompson@qc.edu or srausher@nyc.rr.com).

Miriam Thompson
Queens College

TIAA-CREF responds

In the March *Clarion*, a letter to the editor titled "Prisoners of TIAA-CREF" cited provisions for CUNY's retirement plan accumulations. Several points require clarification.

If eligible for retiree health care, CUNY permits two-thirds of the account to be cashed out. While mar-

ket fluctuations affect amounts, *employees retain ownership of the funds*; TIAA does not "appropriate additional funds." One-third of the account cannot be cashed out so that funds are available for health coverage. TIAA-CREF, MetLife and The Guardian are required to adhere to this *CUNY policy*. Alternate payment options are available for this one-third.

In 1991, TIAA introduced moving TIAA traditional accumulations into variable accounts for all participants including CUNY employees.

Rollovers from CUNY's Retirement Plan to an IRA maintain the NY State tax-free withdrawal status; earnings accrued in IRAs do not. A tax advisor should be consulted for personal situations.

Article 27 of the Agreement between CUNY and PSC/CUNY states "members of the ORP who have separated from CUNY service and are collecting a retirement benefit based on their service at CUNY shall be eligible for coverage in the City Health Insurance Program." Therefore, employees must receive annuity income or interest payments on at least a minimum portion of their accumulation.

For additional information, please meet with a TIAA-CREF Consultant who visits your campus monthly.

Rosemary Markowski
TIAA-CREF

Write to Clarion

Letters should be no more than 150-200 words in length and are subject to editing.

Contract demands move forward

By PETER HOGNESS

After months of preparation that included membership surveys, small committee work, input by union delegates and intensive research by the negotiating committee, the PSC Executive Council presented a proposed list of contract demands to the union's March Delegate Assembly.

Delegates will vote on the demands at their next meeting, on May 1, and the approved list of demands will be published in *Clarion*. On May 12 there will be a mass membership meeting on the contract, where members can discuss the demands with the PSC's negotiating team.

The union has been preparing for this round of collective bargaining since the fall. On September 25, 2002, the PSC sent CUNY management a formal request to open bargaining and to start with the subject of intel-

Delegates to vote May 1

lectual property, an area unresolved in the last contract talks. But management did not agree to begin with intellectual property, and the PSC subsequently filed charges at the Public Employment Relations Board.

MEMBERS' IDEAS

Meanwhile the Executive Council studied the results of the fall membership survey and listened to hundreds of delegates and members with ideas for demands. The result is a shorter and more focused list than the one that delegates approved in 2000.

"When the last negotiations began, we laid out an agenda for transforming CUNY," PSC President Barbara Bowen told *Clarion*. "We have kept that perspective, but now

we're in a position to move directly to some key issues."

Behind each demand, Bowen said, are months of research and analysis. The bargaining team examined the last negotiations, looking at both the PSC's gains and the demands that were not won. Detailed study of union contracts at other universities helped shape the new contract proposals, and both the December and January meetings of the Delegate Assembly discussed which issues should be the PSC's priority demands.

A key test for each proposed demand was whether members would mobilize in its support. "We can have all the logical arguments we

want," Bowen explained, "but that's not enough. In the last round of negotiations, we saw that while arguments are important, bargaining is really about power." Member mobilization is especially important at a time of austerity budgets, she added: "We need to recognize the current economic situation without capitulating to it."

The draft demands, approved by the Executive Council on March 20, fall into several basic categories. Economic demands include pay increases for all titles, so that CUNY salaries will again be competitive with other major universities. Another focus is job security,

a particularly pressing issue for HEOs, CLTs and part-time faculty. On workload, the proposal calls for an overall reduction in teaching load

to bring CUNY in line with other universities, and for redressing inequities that affect specific job titles and colleges.

Equity for adjuncts is addressed in demands on pay, time and leave, seniority, professional treatment and benefits. The proposed package also includes specific demands for library and counseling faculty, and for PSC members at the Educational Opportunity Centers and the Hunter College Campus Schools.

In several sections there is an emphasis on quality-of-life concerns, such as health and family issues. Proposed improvements in child care and family leave provisions aim to make CUNY a more "family-friendly" workplace. Other parts of the package would strengthen the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund and tighten health and safety protections. Improvements in the grievance procedure are also on the agenda.

The proposed package includes demands on health care & family leave.

Watching what you read

By TOMIO GERON

Students, faculty and staff use libraries at CUNY every day, studying everything from poetry to physics to protest movements. But there are growing concerns that they could be watched.

Libraries and booksellers across the country are worried by provisions of new security legislation that make it easier for government to gather data on people's reading habits. "America's libraries are disturbed by the PATRIOT Act," library faculty member Scott White wrote in a recent LaGuardia newsletter. The Act "provide[s] law enforcement officials with broader surveillance powers that lessen the current legal standards needed to obtain search warrants," White explained, "and forces libraries to surrender circulation and user information records."

At least one CUNY library has reportedly had an FBI inquiry since the Act was passed. At Bronx Community College (BCC) last July, Assistant to the Vice President for Administration and Finance Alyce Zimmerman called an administrative assistant in the library's Learning Resource Center (LRC) and asked for sign-in sheets for computer use from certain dates. The records were promptly delivered.

LRC supervisor Laroi Lawton was on vacation, but was disturbed to learn of the incident upon his return – especially when Zimmerman told him that the records had been need-

Monitoring CUNY libraries

ed for the FBI and other law enforcement officials.

"On one level, I can understand what they were doing," said Lawton, "but on another level, this is intrusive. One of the things I told [administrators] is that I felt we'd been violated." Lawton told *Clarion* that had he been there, he would have resisted turning over the information.

The inquiry focused on a student at BCC, but it is unclear exactly why the government's interest was aroused. "Someone got into a Web site that they shouldn't have," was all that Zimmerman would tell *Clarion*. BCC administrators would not say whether the investigation fell under the PATRIOT Act or normal criminal law. Details of the case "are really not open to disclosure," said BCC legal counsel Mary Rogan.

Theresa McManus, chief librarian at BCC, would not comment on the specifics of the incident. But she did say that those working in CUNY libraries should not give patron records to administrators without being shown a subpoena or search warrant, as happened in this case. "It's part of professional ethics," McManus said. "My policy is they would never just offer it up. If my boss came and said, 'I want to see who checked out this book,' I'd say, 'I'm sorry this is confidential.'"

A New York State law adopted in response to past FBI abuses states that library records should be treat-

ed as confidential, except when information is sought with a subpoena or a court order.

Records of which books individuals check out of CUNY libraries are deleted from the system after the book is returned, according to McManus. Sign-in sheets for computer use in BCC's Learning Resource Center used to be saved in order to compile an anonymous end-of-semester report on computer usage – but Lawton said he now compiles that information daily and then destroys the sheets.

GUIDELINES?

If a librarian is presented with a subpoena or a search warrant from the FBI as part of a PATRIOT Act investigation, the Act states that he or she is not allowed to tell others. But an anonymous survey of over 900 US public libraries, conducted in October 2002 by Dr. Leigh Estabrook of the University of Illinois Library Research Center, found that over 10% had recently faced FBI or other law enforcement inquiries about their patrons.

A similar survey of PSC members working in CUNY libraries drew 41 responses out of 300 questionnaires sent out. These included only one report of questioning by FBI or other law enforcement, a secondhand description of one or more inquiries at Baruch. When *Clarion* asked Arthur Downing, chief librarian at Baruch, for comment, he said that there had been only one FBI inquiry at Baruch, and that it



At least one FBI inquiry was made at Baruch's library, above.

had concerned financial fraud, not alleged terrorism. One survey respondent commented that University librarians need "step-by-step and case-by-case CUNY guidelines on how to manage when FBI or other law enforcement agents request information."

CUNY General Counsel Frederick Schaffer said a policy is already in place. "The general procedure for anyone around the University who's contacted by a law enforcement officer is to contact my office to evaluate it," he said. But awareness of this policy seems low; most library faculty that *Clarion* spoke with did not know about it. "There is no written policy," said Madeline Ford, head reference librarian at Lehman and president of the Library Association of CUNY (LA-CUNY). "However, we've been told

to contact our chief librarian and the chief librarian will determine if they have to contact the [Lehman] legal office."

CIVIL LIBERTIES

Ford said that librarians are worried about the effect of the PATRIOT Act on civil liberties and student privacy. "It is a major concern because we don't want to be in a position to have to give up information freely," she said. "It has an impact on students and their ability to trust us in what we do."

Many librarians and booksellers believe the Act infringes on the constitutional right to privacy, said LaGuardia's White. "I think it'll be challenged as unconstitutional in the courts," said White. "I think that cooler heads will eventually prevail."

Your rights under the contract

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

Implementation is the key issue

The articles in this series so far have tried to clarify some of the major innovations of the current contract: adjunct professional hours, re-assigned time for untenured faculty, HEO workload committees and other issues. It has been gratifying to see that what was at first vexed has now become fairly routine, at least on most campuses. None of this has happened without intervention by

the union, but part-time faculty are now regularly being paid for office hours, College Language Immersion teachers have finally received their longevity increments, untenured faculty have begun to plan for re-assigned time, and the HEO workload committees have started to convene. The structural change we worked for in the contract has begun. But only begun: some members

have found that the new features are not being implemented smoothly, and the union has already been forced to grieve infractions.

LEGALLY BINDING

Please let us know or contact your chapter chair if you're finding that the new elements of the contract are not being observed on your campus. There is no excuse for fail-

ure to implement the contract; its provisions are legally binding.

That the union has to do battle with management to implement a contract to which they agreed is absurd. I find it especially so when PSC members have responded as never before to the call to support the University in its struggle to gain budget restorations from Albany. The two contractual elements I discuss here

have been particularly subject to managerial foot-dragging, and the union continues to work both on the campuses and from the central office to press for resolution of remaining issues. With this month's column on contractual rights comes a message to management: As we enter a new round of collective bargaining, the best way to create a productive climate for negotiations is to stop forcing the union to fight for implementation of rights we have already won.

Pay for department chairs during annual leave

Department chairs give extraordinary service to CUNY. As faculty members elected by their peers, they carry the heaviest burden of the shared governance on which a university is built. They often put their own research agendas on hold to devote three years or more to their colleagues. With the steady erosion of public funds from CUNY, the chairs' job has become even harder: they find themselves stretching department budgets and lobbying for full-time faculty lines, administering large cohorts of part-time faculty, and making difficult decisions about their nearest colleagues. This contractual provision, if properly implemented, could go a long way toward sustaining pivotal members of the university community.

PRORATED SALARY

The heart of the provision is that department chairs will be paid a prorated portion of their normal salaries if their departments are designated as requiring either one or two months of work by the chair during the contractual annual leave. Annual leave, as defined in Article 14.2 of the contract and revised in the current agreement, extends from the day after spring Commencement until August 30th of that year (or for an equivalent consecutive period). During this time, full-time teaching faculty are officially on leave from all college responsibilities.

Especially with the inordinately heavy teaching loads we carry at CUNY, annual leave is essential time for one's own research, writing and creative work – also for rest. A symptom of the increasing managerial control of academic life is a blurring of the boundary between work and private life; we all have

something at stake in

protecting annual leave. Department chairs who agree to work for their departments during this period should be compensated at their normal rate of salary.

ADMINISTRATIVE

If the department is designated as requiring one month of additional work during the summer annual leave, the chair will receive one-ninth of his or her annual salary; if the department is designated as requiring two additional months, the chair receives two-ninths of the annual salary. (Faculty salaries are for nine months of work, paid over 12 months.) The provision should be simple: it acknowledges that departments have often required administrative work during the period when faculty are contractually on leave, and provides for fair payment for chairs who do. Management, however, has made it difficult by

stalling on the designation of departments and claiming that there are no funds to cover the costs.

I want to be clear: the CUNY Chancellor and Board of Trustees proposed the concept and signed off on this agreement; they are required to adhere to it. For many years, CUNY colleges have been paying department chairs for administrative work during their annual leave. This agreement restructures and regularizes that payment. Management made no attempt to attribute costs for this provision to our contractual settlement, as they did, for instance, with the cost of the re-assigned time or the HEO/CLT professional fund.

But the pay for department chairs is emphatically not an "unfunded mandate," as some campus managements have called it. An unfunded mandate is a requirement imposed by an outside authority: this provision is part of the agreement

management signed and, in fact, originates in a management demand. We are well within our rights in insisting that it be implemented.

The provision also must be implemented as written. Some college presidents have offered department chairs lump sums for summer work or proposed that chairs work at the pro-rated rate for less than a month. The contract is controlling: individual arrangements by college presidents with department chairs, however well intentioned, would be in violation of the agreement.

With that said, let me clarify how it should work. The agreement states that the "President of the college, after consultation with the Department Chairperson, shall designate each department as having a nine-month, a ten-month, or an eleven-month Department Chairperson." The designation is of the department, not the individual who serves as chair.

The only exception to the right of the President to make the designation is the case of an incumbent department chair: in that case, the chair is required to agree to the designation. But where an election is being held this spring, the agreement states that the president must make the designation "no later than one month before the election." On many campuses, that hasn't happened, and the PSC has been forced to file a grievance to make it work.

DEPARTMENT STATUS

Because the timing for designation of the department's status is tied to departmental chair elections, it would be possible for college presidents to make determinations this spring about some departments and not others. The PSC insisted that current department chairs not be forced to accept summer work, but we did not want the implementation of this provision to be dragged out over three years. The union has taken the position that the only equitable way to implement this pro-

vision is to make the designation of all departments at once, for summer 2003. Otherwise, chairs in different departments will be paid at different rates, a situation the union finds unacceptable.

The CUNY Chancellor and BoT proposed this concept and signed off on this agreement.

The agreement does not specify criteria for designation of a department as requiring one or two months of work by the chair in the summer, but it does set the normal contractual limit on hours for administrative work: 120 hours of professional obligation per month. The additional month or months of work need not occur in the same calendar month – for instance, the time could be split between the beginning and the end of the summer – but the additional time must be in one-month increments. Chairs have enumerated many responsibilities that might constitute additional work during their annual leave.

EXISTING PRACTICES

One final point is that the union won an explicit guarantee in the contract that the designation of a department as requiring nine, ten or eleven months of work "shall not affect existing agreed-upon practices concerning coverage of the Department Chairperson's duties when he/she is unavailable to perform them." If active scholars and researchers are to continue accepting positions as department chairs, it is essential that current practices allowing for occasional substitute chairs continue.

Unfortunately, the memorandum from CUNY's Office for Faculty and Staff Relations to college presidents is in error on this issue; it states, "The University bargained for the services of the officer Department Chairperson, not an *ad hoc* substitute." This is flatly contradicted by the contractual agreement, which is explicit that "agreed-upon practices concerning coverage" will continue; established practices do not result in *ad hoc* substitutes. Chairs and college presidents should be guided by the language of the contractual agreement. **– BB**



John Etheridge

HEO and CLT professional fund

For the first time, the contract gives Higher Education Officers and College Laboratory Technicians access to substantial funds to support professional development. The contract ensured funding at half a million dollars every year for this purpose. The union and the University are considering a proposal that the PSC manage the funds, which will be placed in a separate account. The union's lawyers will work with the University to ensure that we meet the legal requirements for such accounts. We expect that the fund will be administered by a board of trustees, and it will report publicly on how the money is disbursed.

A committee of HEOs, CLTs and members of the negotiating team has been meeting to develop implementation plans. To apply for funding, a HEO or CLT will submit a short application form providing details of the proposed budget and a description of the project. Appropriate projects are as varied as the work CLTs and HEOs do: a HEO who works in student services might seek funding for a course on developing Web sites to communicate with students; a CLT who works in the slide room of an art department might apply for travel money to visit major museums and improve the department's collection of slides; a HEO who runs a Caribbean Studies program might ask to attend an academic conference at the University of the West Indies; a CLT who works in a chemistry lab might seek advanced training in new scientific equipment.

The goal of the fund is to enhance the professional lives of the thousands of our members who do academic work that is not teaching. Its effect will be felt by all of us, faculty and students as well as staff – as colleagues return to their work renewed by the activities the fund supports.

PANEL

The plan is for decisions on applications to be made by a panel that includes two HEOs, two CLTs and one management designee. The HEOs and CLTs on the panel will be chosen for their experience with professional development and grant funding. We have modeled the decision-making process on the PSC-CUNY Award: applications will be judged on a professional, academic basis, and decisions will be final. Whether there will be one

panel for all applications or panels at each campus is still being ironed out. The amount of money available for each campus and CUNY central office where HEOs work will be proportional to the number of HEOs

The goal of the fund is to enhance the professional lives of our members who do non-teaching academic work.

and CLTs at each workplace. In the interests of fairness, preference in awarding grants in subsequent years will be given to those who have not yet received funding. Applicants are free to request any amount up to \$2,000, depending on the nature of their projects. At the completion of the project, applicants will be asked to submit a brief account of their work, similar to the one faculty submit on completion of a PSC-CUNY grant.

Time spent on funded projects has to be approved by the individual's supervisor, but will not be charged to annual leave. Once you receive the grant and your supervisor's approval on the scheduling, the days you spend on a funded activity will be considered part of your job. Union and management are still finalizing the process for gaining the supervisor's approval for activities

that require time during working hours, and we will notify HEOs and CLTs of the details in a separate letter on the fund.

ALLOCATION

Because of the delay in starting the grant program this year, funds from this year's allocation will be available for grants next year. No money will be lost, or absorbed into the general budget. Our hope, shared by management, is that in future years all the funds will be disbursed during the academic year in which they are allocated so that there can be maximum use of the grant. HEOs and CLTs will hear from the PSC directly about the details of the application form and the timing of submissions. The union also plans to offer workshops on grant applications for those who haven't had experience with applications; many of our HEOs and CLTs have secured major grants for the University and themselves, and will be willing to provide guidance to others. The establishment of this fund has taken too long, but it will be a real boon to our members when it begins to work, a major advance in recognizing the professional needs of CUNY's professional staff. – BB



Lisa Quiriones

The New York City Council overrode Mayor Mike Bloomberg's veto of and passed a law in April that will give welfare recipients a better opportunity to take CUNY courses. The bill, Intro. 93-A, passed easily, 46-5, and supporters of the measure, above, broke into cheers and hugs. People receiving public assistance should soon be able to count education and training activities (including ESL, GED and vocational courses, and 2- and 4- year college study) full-time towards their 35-hour per week "work requirement." PSC members were active in the Coalition for Access to Training and Education (CATE), which pushed for the bill. Lorraine Cohen of the PSC Women's Committee spoke at a CATE rally before the final vote. Bloomberg responded to the vote by saying that "the Council has chosen to turn back the clock on welfare reform," and vowed to challenge the bill in court.

The CUNY ESL Council and the Professional Staff Congress present

Testing The Limits: A Colloquium on High-Stakes Testing in Higher Education

Friday, May 2nd, 10AM-6PM

City College/CUNY

Steinman Hall, 140th Street and Convent Ave, 1st Floor

Peter Sacks, writer for *The Nation*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*

James Purpura, Teachers College/Columbia University

Robert Schaeffer, Fairtest Public Education Director

William Crain, City College/CUNY

Registration \$25 full-time / \$20 adjunct, part-time

\$5 off for pre-registration; for more information

e-mail mawlc@aol.com

Continental breakfast included; lunch available at additional cost.

Pre-retirement conference

The annual PSC Pre-Retirement Conference will be held on Friday, June 6, 2003, from 9 to 4 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 below. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. If you wish kosher food, please send a note with your registration.

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 27, 2003 to: Clarissa Gilbert Weiss, PSC, 25 W. 43rd Street, New York, NY 10036

State budget up for grabs

By TOMIO GERON

This year's New York State budget battle is different – and not only because of the astonishing overall deficit of \$11.5 billion.

Governor Pataki's budget would slash State funding for CUNY by over \$100 million, a 12.5% reduction. Senior colleges would be hit with an \$82 million cut; community colleges would see base aid reduced by \$345 per full-time equivalent student. Higher education opportunity programs such as SEEK would lose half of their funding statewide. Pataki is calling for a CUNY tuition hike of up to \$1,200, with simultaneous cuts in financial aid.

Unions and other critics argue that this year's budget crisis is self-inflicted, a consequence of past decisions to reduce State revenues. They note that Pataki has pushed through \$13 billion in tax cuts in the last eight years, largely to the benefit of New York's wealthy. Legislative support for some kind of tax increase is growing, but the governor says he remains opposed.

DEADLINE PASSES

State legislators missed the April 1 deadline for adopting a new budget, for the 19th year in a row. In the past, a budget was often not passed until months later. But this year, the severity of the crisis may lead to an earlier resolution: with tax collections down, the problem only gets worse with every passing day.

In early March, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Pataki agreed on a revenue estimate of \$40.3 billion for the new fiscal year.

\$11.5 billion deficit

Agreement on a common figure is the first step in budget negotiations, and in other years this has not occurred until the summer.

But a bumpy road still lies ahead. Early April saw the collapse of a tentative deal on borrowing \$4.2 billion against money owed to New York from tobacco lawsuits.

Most statehouse observers expect

a budget by May – but with so much in flux and the bargaining behind closed doors, there are few predictions about

what this year's budget agreement will look like.

Members of the PSC Legislative Committee, officers and other activists visited members of the Assembly and State Senate throughout March and April, both in their districts and in Albany. The union's message was that the Legislature must restore and increase State funds for CUNY. The grass-roots lobbyists emphasized that restoring cuts to TAP and community college base aid – which the Legislature has done in recent years – is not enough: senior college cuts must be restored as well.

Every PSC chapter took part in a huge postcard campaign against the CUNY cuts, with a big push on the March 26 "CUNY Day

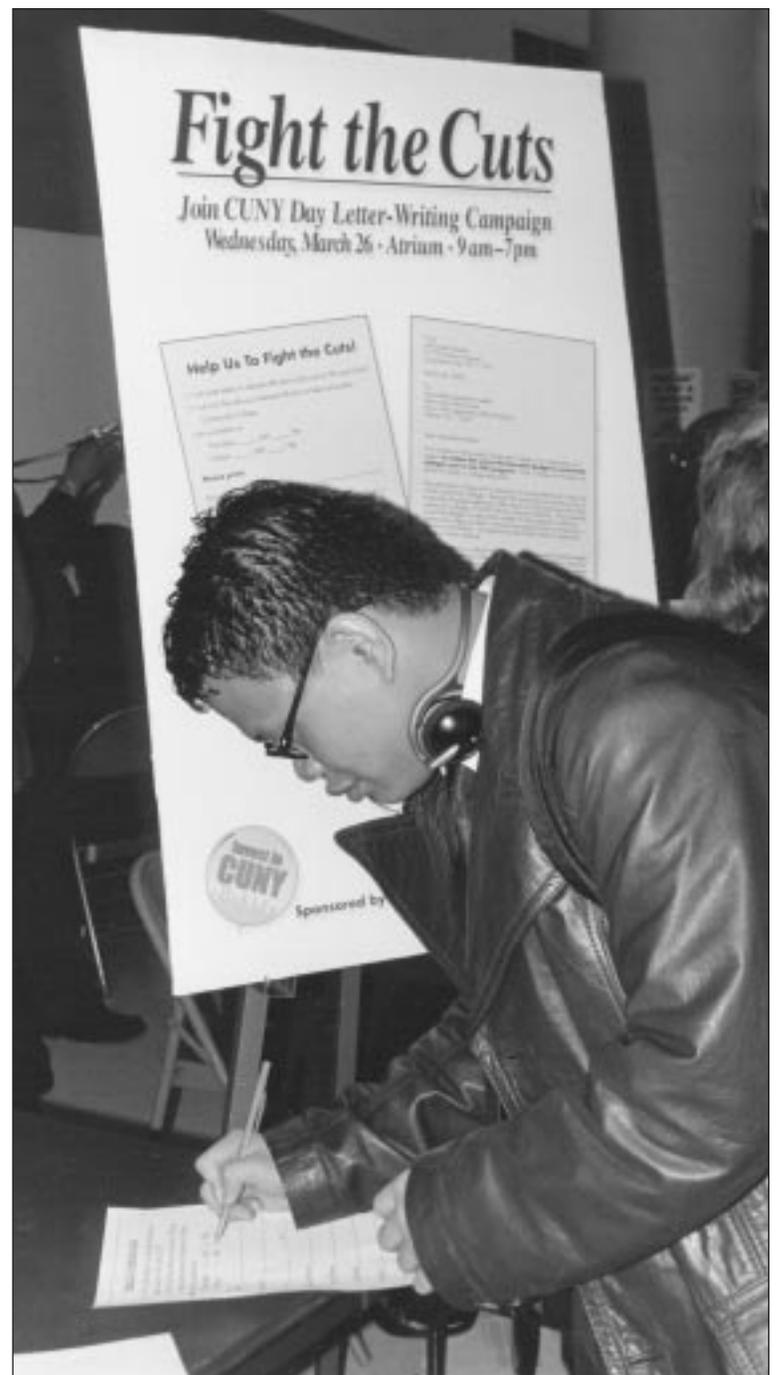
of Action." On April 14, a union delegation delivered 105,453 cards signed by students, faculty, staff and community members to Governor Pataki in Albany (see cover). Meanwhile campus chapters are busy signing people up for a massive "March for Public Education" on May 3 (see story at right).

These efforts were combined with a media campaign: in March and April, a PSC television ad ran in Albany and on NY1 in New York City (see inset photo at left). "Protect the future," the ad concludes. "STOP the cuts at the City University of New York." (You can see the ad at www.psc-cuny.org/cdad.htm.)

All this PSC activity was part of a growing outcry from unions and community groups against Pataki's effort to slash public services. Over 30,000 health care workers flooded the capital on April 1 to protest against \$2 billion in proposed health care cuts. Also, a coalition of labor groups, including NY State United Teachers, CWA and the New York State AFL-CIO, bought television ads to urge a fair tax program instead of drastic cuts to education and health care.

In mid-April, Bruno and Silver said they had reached a "conceptual agreement" to restore \$1.9 billion of Pataki's cuts, but kept mum on details. The governor blasted their announcement, and Bruno admitted that the two-house deal could fall apart.

Seventy-seven percent of New Yorkers think that some form of tax increase should be used to solve the budget deficit, according to a February poll. Only 18% said that the budget shortfall should be solved entirely through spending cuts.



A Day of Action

A wave of action swept across the city as all CUNY campuses participated in the March 26 CUNY Day of Action. Clockwise from left (on this page): over 300 students attend a reading by Piri Thomas, author of *Down These Mean Streets*, at York College; Anthony Andrews, member of the PSC Legislative Committee, urges the crowd at York to go to Albany; PSC Legislative Director Cecelia McCall speaks with City Council member John Liu at the PSC CUNY Day breakfast; a student at LaGuardia Community College signs a letter to state legislators.



Get on the bus!

By TOMIO GERON

May 3 is your best chance to have an impact on the State budget cuts proposed for CUNY.

A massive "March for Public Education" will be held in Albany on that day, timed for maximum impact on the budget debate. With a final deal expected by mid-May, the march and rally will probably occur when lawmakers are in the midst of crucial decisions on education funding. Organizers aim to make this the biggest demonstration that Albany has ever seen.

"We've rented the buses, we have a permit, we've told the press and the politicians," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "Now there's only

May 3 rally in Albany

one question – will *you* be there?" Bowen urged members and students to sign up for a seat on one of the many union-sponsored buses that will leave from CUNY campuses. "If you have ever felt that it's an outrage that public higher education is not funded in this state, this is your chance to press for an alternative," she told *Clarion*. "Even if you haven't thought of yourself as an activist, this is a critical moment. It's crucial that we have a strong showing from CUNY faculty and staff – our numbers will be counted."

Governor Pataki has proposed a 12.5% cut to CUNY's budget, and tuition increases of up to \$1,200 per year. School districts statewide are facing deep cuts as the state looks to plug a \$11.5 billion budget deficit – the largest in real dollars since the Great Depression.

But the march and rally – from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at the Empire State Plaza in Albany – is not just to turn back this year's cuts. Organizers hope it will set the stage for years of State support for education. "We're not just directing this at this year's budget," said Tony Bifaro, spokesperson for New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), one of the main organizers of the rally, "but on long-term infrastructure and investment for education for this state." The protest will highlight need for new State revenues to ensure high-quality education.

ALL LEVELS

The march aims to unite those concerned about every level of learning, from pre-K through post-grad. By early April, over 20,000 people had already signed up to attend.

PSC chapters throughout CUNY have been signing members up for the trip. "We're getting an overwhelming response from students, faculty and staff who want to go," said Joan Greenbaum, chair of the

PSC chapter at LaGuardia, which signed up over 100 students, staff and faculty during the March 26 CUNY Day of Action.

"They've been writing letters, sending faxes and now they want to go to Albany," Greenbaum said. "They're very enthusiastic about wanting to do something, and they recognize that we have to respond on many fronts."

...AND A FREE HAT

To sign up for a seat on the bus, PSC members can either contact their campus chapter chair or fax in the coupon below. Buses will depart from CUNY campuses at approximately 8:00 am, and return around 7:00 in the evening. A free lunch and bottled water will be provided, and everyone who goes will get a free PSC hat. There will be entertainment before the rally starts, and plenty of food vendors and restrooms during the day.

The coalition organizing the demonstration includes virtually every education organization in the state. It was initiated by the two major umbrella groups on public education, the New York State Educational Conference Board and Public Higher Education Conference Board, and has grown to include advocacy groups such as the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), Citizen Action and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. In the unlikely event that a State budget is passed before May 3, the march will still go forward.

"Many people who support public education are coming together," said PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall, chair of the union's Legislative Committee. "We're sending a message that public education must be funded. Public higher education must be a large and visible part of that message – and that's why PSC members and their students and families must come to Albany on May 3."



Lisa Quiñones (top), Gary Schoichet (bottom)

Top: Students throughout CUNY like this one at New York City College of Technology used the PSC's ACT NOW software to lobby Albany – 3,386 letters were sent using the software on March 26. Bottom: Students, faculty and staff march at Bronx Community College on March 26.

TICKET TO ALBANY

NAME: _____

WORK PHONE: _____

HOME and/or CELL PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

WHICH CAMPUS TO GET ON BUS: _____

Fax to 212-302-7815 or e-mail this info to macarlese@pscmail.org. For more info, contact your campus chapter chair or call Mary Ann Carlese at 212-354-1252, x225.

Welfare Fund dental changes

By TOMIO GERON

As part of the effort to stabilize the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, the Fund will switch to a new dental plan provider, effective May 1, 2003.

After extensive discussion and analysis, the Welfare Fund has moved to Guardian DentalGuard Preferred, the third-largest dental administrator in the country. All members will receive detailed information about the new Guardian DentalGuard Preferred plan by May 1, 2003.

Under the Guardian plan, a dentist belonging to the Guardian network will charge according to a reduced fee schedule – typically a 35% discount from usual and customary fees. These negotiated fees will vary depending on the location of the dentist.

PREVENTION

Members' out-of-pocket-costs will be further reduced for selected procedures. The deepest reductions will be in preventive procedures, because medical evidence shows that preventative care is the most important factor in dental health.

The move is part of the WF's effort to control costs. The Fund has run an operating deficit in 11 of the last 14 years, and currently spends \$4 million per year on dental benefits. After extensive discussions with members (see *Clarion*, May-

Trustees choose new provider

YOUR BENEFITS

December 2002), the WF Trustees set a target of saving \$1.5 million from the dental plan to help stabilize the Fund's finances. "Unfortunately, there is no way to reduce costs by \$1.5 million without reducing benefits for some," said Steve London, PSC First Vice President and Welfare Fund Executive Officer. "While this has been a difficult process for the Trustees, we have been forced to take a new look at the Fund's den-

tal benefit to see how we can best get our money's worth. It is true that some members will experience a hardship, but many will see an improvement in dental coverage."

A major problem with the old SIDS dental plan was that it paid participating dentists at very low rates – and as a result, there was a shrinking number of dentists in its network. When PSC members were asked about the SIDS plan in the recent membership survey, most respondents said they did not use a dentist in the plan. Only 15-20% used SIDS dentists for expensive proce-

dures. The new Guardian Plan will give members access to over 6,000 dentists in the tri-state area and more than 64,000 dentists nationwide, six times as many as before. The Trustees sought to balance the goal of getting PSC members the best price for dental services with the goal of obtaining the largest possible group of participating dentists.

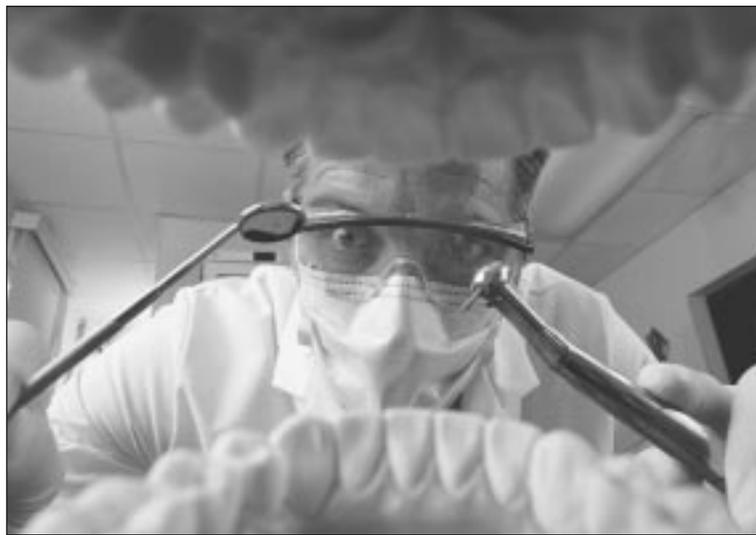
IN OR OUT

Under the new plan, there will no longer be a deductible for participating or non-participating dentists. Out-of-network benefits will still be available, but for expensive out-of-network procedures the subsidy will be small.

The new plan does not have separate orthodontia coverage or a separate fee schedule, but use of participating orthodontists will mean significant savings over the usual and customary fees. Those already in orthodontic care under the old plan as of April 1 will be allowed to complete their course of treatment.

On May 1, 2003, the day that the Guardian plan goes into effect, the SIDS plan will end. After April 1, 2003, SIDS will not process pre-estimates for dental work. Pre-estimates already issued by SIDS must be completed and filed within six months.

If you have further questions after you receive the detailed information in the mail, call the Welfare Fund at 212-354-5230.



Affordable help with legal issues

Trying to understand legal documents can sometimes feel like reading medieval English. For those of us who are neither lawyers nor medievalists, the words can look familiar without actually making sense.

Fortunately for PSC members, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) offers an inexpensive legal service plan to help cut through the confusion.

CALL ANY TIME

For an annual fee of \$65 – less than it would take to get in the door at many New York City law firms – NYSUT offers a range of services. Members get unlimited access to legal advice over the phone, toll-free, weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm. A hot-line provides help with urgent matters at other times. Close to 30,000 members of NYSUT belong to the plan, some joining directly and others affiliated through their local unions.

Sometimes a letter or a phone call from a lawyer is all it takes to resolve a problem, and NYSUT plan lawyers do that for members on a daily basis. The plan also provides for two free hour-long office consul-

\$65 a year, from NYSUT

YOUR BENEFITS

tations with NYSUT's law firm or one of hundreds of referral firms in New York State and nationwide. NYSUT's firm, Feldman, Kramer & Monaco, has been given the highest possible rating by the legal research company Martindale-Hubbell.

If a legal problem can't be resolved with a phone call or letter, the NYSUT plan will refer members to an attorney who will charge a discounted rate – 60% of their normal hourly fee or \$105 per hour, whichever is lower. Members can also purchase additional packages that focus on the needs of small businesses or senior citizens, including family members.

The program is popular as a cost-effective way to handle big life changes, says Jean Kissane of NYSUT Member Benefits. When members call, she notes, "they need an attorney quickly."

Kissane says that the two most

common reasons NYSUT members seek out the legal plan are to get help with real estate (e.g., closing on an agreement to buy a home) or divorce. Other areas of need are bankruptcy and criminal representation for a relative.

CREATE A WILL

Another often-used provision of the plan is creating or updating one simple will per year. "Some people just enroll to get the free will," says Kissane. "They really feel they need to get a will in place."

All PSC members in active service are eligible for the plan. The

plan also covers the member's spouse, domestic partner, dependent children under 19 and dependent parents, all at no extra cost.

Members of the PSC's Retiree Chapter are eligible for NYSUT's Retiree Legal Service Plan, which costs \$36 per year. The retiree plan offers just one half-hour of in-person consultation per year, but adds the provision of a simple power of attorney; its other features are generally the same.

For more information on the plan, call NYSUT Member Benefits (800-626-8101) or contact them by e-mail (benefits@nysutmail.org). You can apply over the phone or on the Web at <http://memberbenefits.nysut.org>. – TG

Greek Americans at CUNY

The Greek American University Professionals of CUNY is an association of instructional and support staff employed in CUNY. Its goals are to promote networking among professionals, assist students and

offer programs of special interest to the Greek American community. To join or to be placed on the association's mailing list, please contact its secretary, James Demetro, at 718-289-5736.

CALENDAR

THURSDAY, MAY 1 / 2 pm: March to Governor Pataki's NYC office to protest his proposed \$1,200 tuition hike and budget cuts for CUNY. Meet at 2 pm at 59th St. and 5th Ave., march to Pataki's office at 41st St. and 3rd Ave. Organized by CUNY4All, a student and faculty activist group. Endorsed by Jobs With Justice, NYPIRG, SLAM! and a host of CUNY student government associations and clubs. Call 718-292-7620 for more info.

FRIDAY, MAY 2 / 10 – 6 pm: "Testing The Limits: A Colloquium on High-Stakes Testing in Higher Education." Sponsored by the PSC and the CUNY ESL Council; see p. 5 for details.

✓ **SATURDAY, MAY 3 /** March for Public Education in Albany. Stop the CUNY budget cuts! See p. 7 for details, transportation.

MONDAY, MAY 5 / 1 pm: PSC Retirees Chapter Meeting. Laurie Kupperstein, of the PSC's state affiliate, NYSUT, will speak on NYSUT social services for retirees. At the CUNY Graduate Center, 34th St. and 5th Ave., Rooms 9206-9207. All PSC members welcome.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7: TIAA-CREF at the PSC Office. At 25 West 43rd Street, Fifth Floor. Call Jenny Rosa at 1-800-842-2733 ext. 7288 to schedule an appointment where you can discuss retirement options, asset allocation, tax-deferred annuities, etc.

FRIDAY, MAY 9 / 6 pm: Labor Goes to the Movies presents "The People's Choice": *Salt of the Earth* (1954), runaway winner of this year's audience voting. Based on actual events, a gripping film about a strike by Mexican-American miners – and how women of the community took over the picket line when the courts tried to stop the strike. At the Center for Worker Education, 99 Hudson St., between Franklin and Harrison. \$2 suggested donation.

✓ **MONDAY, MAY 12 / 6 – 8 pm:** Mass Membership Meeting to discuss the union's contract proposals and upcoming contract campaign. All points of view welcome, for open forum with the negotiating team. For location or other details, see the PSC Web site (www.psc-cuny.org) or call Mary Ann Carlese at 212-354-1252.

TUESDAY, MAY 13 / Tenant Day of Action in Albany, one month before rent control and rent stabilization laws expire. For bus information, call Tenants & Neighbors at 212-608-4320 x401.

THURSDAY, MAY 15 / 6 – 8 pm: The PSC Women's Committee meets at the PSC. 25 West 43rd Street, Fifth Floor. For more information, contact Norah Chase at nchase@kbcc.cuny.edu or call 212-354-1252.

Typing can hurt

Repetitive strain illnesses (RSIs) may result when workers perform repetitive motions – such as typing on a keyboard – without a break.

Symptoms of RSIs include tenderness, swelling, tingling sensations, shooting pain in your wrists, fingers, arms, or elbows, and the loss of hand strength and coordination. An umbrella term encompassing more than 20 types of cumulative trauma disorders, RSIs include bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, and tendonitis. RSIs are also known as musculoskeletal disorders because they damage the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, cartilage,

HEALTH & SAFETY

and spinal discs; nerve damage is also a key part of many RSIs.

In medical terms, RSIs are called cumulative trauma disorders because the condition progressively worsens with each repetitive motion made in an awkward position. This is why variety in work routines and periodic work breaks are an important part of any preventive strategy.

Among computer users, one important cause of RSIs is constantly flicking the wrist from side to side to

reach different keys, or to move the mouse. Good typing posture includes keeping the wrist in a neutral position: flat (not bent up or down) and straight (not bent left or right; see diagram below).

Instead of moving your hand at



Incorrect hand position



Correct hand position

NO ACTION

Many people are unaware how much they flick their wrists from side to side while typing because these motions are so unconscious. Try typing in slow motion and

watch what happens when you reach for the “Esc” or “Delete” keys. Using a wrist rest while typing is generally a bad idea because it encourages people to plant their hands in one spot and make all mo-

tions from the wrist. A “split” keyboard can help you keep your wrist in a neutral position, but no product will prevent RSI by itself: re-training yourself in how you type is the key.

There are many other aspects to good typing posture, including how you hold your arms, neck, upper back and shoulders. And there are several other important ergonomics issues for computer users, including eyestrain and vision problems. For more information, here are a few useful Web sites:

- ergo.human.cornell.edu/ergoguide.html (See points #7-9 on typing/mousing posture.)

- www.nycosh.org/rsi.html

- www.tifaq.com

- www.ucsf.edu/sorehand/

An RSI support group meets monthly at Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan. For information call 212-241-2606.

– VM & PH

Ergonomics vs. politics

Business resists worker protections

By VERNON MOGENSEN

Repetitive strain illnesses (RSIs) are the leading cause of work-related safety and health problems in the United States today.

RSIs impose enormous social costs on American workers. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that more than 1.8 million American workers suffer from RSIs annually, one-third of which are serious enough to force workers to miss at least one workday. Victims of carpal tunnel syndrome, one of

the most common forms of RSI, lose an average of 32 workdays, more time than from any other illness. The economic cost to society of RSI-related injuries is estimated to be \$50 billion a year.

Many repetitive-motion jobs are performed by women, but computer work stations are usually designed with a man’s physique in mind. This helps to explain why women suffer a disproportionately high percentage of RSIs.

Fortunately, ergonomics – the science of designing the workplace to

HEALTH & SAFETY

meet the safety and health needs of the worker – provides methods of preventing RSIs. It takes a holistic approach to the relationship between the work environment and human factors such as the worker’s muscles, tendons, joints and nerves. Ergonomics aims to improve job design in order to minimize monotonous and repetitive tasks, and limit work speed-ups, which may con-

tribute to fatigue and stress. In addition, ergonomics also examines such topics as vision problems (for example, how fluorescent lighting contributes to screen glare), or how excessive noise and vibration contribute to stress.

Calls by organized labor and women’s groups for an ergonomics standard to help prevent RSIs went unheeded by the Reagan and Bush administrations until the problem reached epidemic proportions in many workplaces. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was finally permitted to begin working on an ergonomics standard in 1990, but the effort ran into massive corporate opposition. Led by the so-called National Coalition on Ergonomics, an alliance of more than 300 corporations and trade associations formed by the National Association of Manufacturers, opponents delayed completion of a standard for almost a decade.

SOUND SCIENCE

Corporate critics claimed it would be too expensive and complicated to enforce, and asserted that RSIs were merely a matter of employee comfort, not safety and health. Eugene Scalia, a corporate lawyer and son of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, emerged as a leading opponent of the ergonomics standard. He insisted that ergonomics was “junk science,” ignoring the research and conclusions of experts in occupational health. In 1997 and again in 1998, Congressional Republicans asked the National Academy of Sciences to evaluate whether the proposed ergonomics standard was based on sound science. Both times the Academy found that the proposed standard rested on a solid foundation of over 2000 scientific studies of workplace conditions.

President Clinton issued the er-

gonomics standard – weakened, and narrowed in scope – just before the 2000 election. But President George W. Bush and the Republican-controlled Congress used the Congressional Review Act of 1996 to repeal the ergonomics standard in March 2001 – the first time an OSHA standard was ever repealed.

Without a standard in place, workers must rely on the willingness of the Labor Department’s Solicitor General to use the OSHA Act’s “general duty clause” to prosecute employers who persistently fail to take steps to provide safe workplaces. This option is problematic for two reasons: first, it is a time-consuming and uncertain process taken only after RSIs reach extreme proportions in a specific workplace; and second, the Solicitor General is now Eugene Scalia.

DISABLED

At some companies, thousands of workers have been permanently disabled by RSIs. Hardest hit are auto assemblers, poultry cutters, meatpackers, garment workers, workers doing heavy lifting, as well as word-processing and data entry workers.

To convince Congress to repeal the ergonomics standard adopted in 2000, the Bush administration promised a “new and improved” version. However, more than two years have passed with nothing more than voluntary guidelines for the nursing industry. In that time an additional 3.6 million workers have suffered RSI-related injuries.

A new standard is not likely to happen as long as the Republican Party, which controls both Congress and the Presidency, takes the voluntary approach: only 16% of U.S. businesses have volunteered to adopt ergonomics guidelines. In the meantime, unions and workers must take action on their own protect against the crippling effects of RSIs.

Vernon Mogensen is assistant professor of political science at KCC, and the author of *Office Politics: Computers, Labor, and the Fight for Safety and Health (Rutgers)*.

Rocker, labor activist Remembering Joe Strummer

by MARC RIBOT
Musicians’ Local 802

Many mourned the death last December of Joe Strummer.

The former Clash guitarist, a true voice of punk resistance, died in London from a congenital heart disease at age 50.

Virtually unreported in the U.S. media was Strummer’s history of support for labor, including his recent support of the British firefighters’ union during their fight for a decent national contract.

The firefighters showed their gratitude in turn at Strummer’s funeral – the procession down Ladbroke Grove was led by a firetruck.

As his body was carried into the chapel, 12 uniformed members of London’s fire brigades stood guard in silent tribute.

Andy Gilchrist, the 39-year-old head of the Fire Brigades Union, was a Clash fan, and claimed to have been first politicized at their 1978 Rock Against Racism concert. 80,000



William Hruboucak

people showed up at that concert in Hackney, a working class neighborhood of East London, to rock to the Clash and also show their disgust at certain established British rock figures who had affiliated with the racist National Front.

“LONDON’S BURNING”

But the firefighters’ presence at Strummer’s funeral wasn’t just nostalgia. Gilchrist has gone on to lead the first U.K. union to seriously chal-

lenge the antilabor policies of Tony Blair’s deceptively titled “New Labor” government. In mid-November 2002, Strummer played a solidarity benefit for the union at Acton Town Hall. Former Clash bandmate Mick Jones also showed up – their first reunion performance in 19 years – and joined Strummer for the encore, “London’s Burning.” As he left the stage, Strummer shouted, “Give ‘em money. And give the nurses and the teachers money too.”

Strummer’s final public shout, and the solidarity performance that preceded it were broadcast again and again on British television following his death.

And although the negotiations are still unresolved, the support of Strummer and other musicians has been critical in generating publicity and political support for the union.

Joe Strummer was a musician, recording artist and rock rebel whose opposition went beyond hollow rhetoric, phony gestures of resistance and a rad haircut. We could use more like him.

A longer version appeared in the April issue of Allegro, newspaper of Musicians’ Union Local 802; it is reprinted with permission.

A PSC Profile: Steven Markowitz

The doctor is in – the streets

By TOMIO GERON

Examining patients near the World Trade Center site or doing research on the streets of East Harlem may not be most doctors' idea of a day at the office. But Dr. Steven Markowitz would have it no other way.

Markowitz, director of the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems (CBNS) at Queens College, seeks out projects that help those who don't have access to proper health care. Most of his work is focused on occupational health and safety, assisting workers who have been exposed to health risks on the job.

That includes day laborers who did cleanup work in lower Manhattan after the World Trade Center was destroyed. "They were working with a lot of dust and they weren't informed about that risk," says Markowitz, adding that almost none of the workers had seen a doctor because they lacked health coverage.

With 9/11 disaster recovery funds, Markowitz and CBNS staff worked with the New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) and the Latin American Workers Project to create a mobile testing center.

"The workers were worried," Markowitz says. Most of them didn't live in Manhattan, and made a special trip to get examined. In five weeks of testing, the Mobile Unit screened 418 people.

They found that many of the workers had respiratory problems that lasted for months after they worked on the cleanup. Also common were dizziness, poor appetite and sleeping problems, symptoms that cannot be attributed directly to toxins and whose exact cause is still a mystery.

This type of medical work, on the street with patients who have little money, is something that few other physicians in the city can or will take on. But it's what Markowitz has wanted to do ever since he was a medical student. After graduating from Yale, he enrolled at Columbia Medical School in the 1970s. Markowitz ended up taking time off from the program to work with a dye workers' union in New Jersey.

"People who worked in the chemical plant got bladder cancer from working with these dyes," he recalls. Markowitz had to seek out information on occupational health himself, as medical schools didn't recognize the subject as a serious course of study. "It's really an orphan topic," he says. "At the most a few hours are spent on it in 4 years of curriculum." Markowitz went on to train in occupational medicine under the late Dr. Irving Selikoff,



Dr. Steven Markowitz examines a day laborer who did cleanup work near the WTC site.

the noted asbestos researcher at Mount Sinai.

Last month Markowitz was honored by NYCOSH for outstanding work in the health and safety field in 2002. "Steven has made so many contributions to occupational safety and health that it's extremely difficult to pinpoint a single reason that NYCOSH is honoring him this year," says NYCOSH spokesperson Jonathan Bennett, "but what stands out is his enormously effective hands-on work with large groups of at-risk workers."

The award from NYCOSH is a great honor, says Markowitz, but he believes occupational health is in essence a straightforward problem. "Problems in the work environment are not difficult to reverse," he says. "They are man-made conditions. Change the conditions and you can prevent people from getting sick."

But prevention cannot be accomplished just by working in an office. "To me it meant going outside the examining room," explains Markowitz, "dealing with worlds in which physicians don't normally feel comfortable."

For Markowitz, those worlds have ranged from the urban chaos around Ground Zero to quiet rural Tennessee. For several years he has directed a major health-screening program for current and former employees at three plants in Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee that produce nuclear material for the Department of Energy. In cooperation with the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical & Energy Workers International Union (PACE), which

represents workers at these sites, Markowitz's team has screened over 8,000 workers for chronic lung disease, kidney and liver disease and hearing loss. It is the largest occupational health testing program in the country.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Though details are classified, some of the plants' output was reportedly used in nuclear weapons. Considering the scale of possible health risks in these jobs, the workers had received relatively little medical attention before the screening project was started.

"I think there was a lot of awareness about radiation," says Markowitz. "I think there was very little awareness about chemicals." The program has also broken new ground by using a CAT scan for early detection of lung cancer. The screening has already detected 20 lung cancer cases with this new procedure.

The workers' union, PACE, has been an active part of the project, holding educational workshops on health risks and the screening program. Union outreach to the work-

ers has played a vital role, as many do not trust company doctors.

"This is not a service delivered by outside professionals, but a true collaboration in which the union is out front and involved in every aspect of the project," Markowitz says. "In communities, unions are the face of the project. We have rank-and-file workers in plants doing education workshops."

This community aspect of health care is a central part of Markowitz's latest effort, a pollution testing project in New York City neighborhoods that have high asthma rates. Markowitz and his team have set up a "mobile air lab" that will measure air pollutants at street level.

For years, advocates in East Harlem and the South Bronx have argued that heavy traffic from large trucks and bus depots as well as factories is a major reason why local asthma rates are among the highest in the country. But studies have not conclusively tied asthma rates to pollution or any other particular factor. Markowitz thinks better data may help provide the answer.

"If you look at air pollution data, monitors are generally placed on

top of buildings, not in the neighborhoods," Markowitz points out. "In East Harlem, the closest government air monitors are on top of Bloomingdale's [on 59th Street] and on other end, in the Mott Haven section of the Bronx. So if you want to know if trucks produce pollution [in East Harlem] you really can't find out that information."

The air monitoring is expected to begin near local schools within the next two months. Results could affect public policy in areas from land use zoning to transportation to health care.

"The data can serve as very powerful information for community groups that want to participate in policy and important decisions," Markowitz says. "It's the kind of information both residents and policymakers need. Right now they just count trucks' smoke plumes."

All this keeps Markowitz very busy. He often travels to Washington D.C. to develop support for his national projects, has served on the editorial boards of several scientific journals, and has worked as a consultant to the World Health Organization.

Based at CUNY since 1998, Markowitz says it's been a good match. "I've found the CUNY environment an excellent place for us to do our work," he says, crediting his colleagues at Queens with creating a supportive and respectful atmosphere.

UNION OUTREACH

"I don't think it's an accident that none of the seven medical schools in New York City put a mobile unit downtown," he adds. "It was a CUNY institute that took on the day laborer project, because that's our mission."

That mission also shapes how Markowitz and the roughly 30 people on the CBNS staff go about their work. "The common thread in all this work is that we listen carefully to what people are concerned about, whether it's poor residents or workers in rural areas who build bombs but never have access to occupational health."

That listening, he says, is the most important part of a doctor's job.

Clarion APRIL 2003

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TIME OF CRISIS

Wars in our future

By MICHAEL FABRICANT

This is a watershed moment. The headlines convey the knotted lash of profound threat – yet this moment is also bursting with possibility. The divide is as thin as our capacity to transcend denial and draw upon very finite resources to resist.

The expansive shadow of anti-democratic forces is chilling public discourse and decision-making. The political choices of the Bush administration, unquestioned by a compliant media, are eroding the most basic assumptions about what it means to be an American.

Preemptive attack is presented as the new basis of U.S. foreign policy; Bush advisors intimate that after Iraq, countries such as Syria, Iran and North Korea are next. The use of first-strike nuclear weapons is discussed as a viable and potentially necessary option.

Civil liberties are quietly but dramatically rolled back and the new “Patriot Laws” used as a weapon against dissent. A common theme is the elimination of any check on executive authority: airplane ticket-holders placed on “no-fly” lists, non-citizens targeted for deportation, and citizens declared “enemy combatants” are all told that they have no right of appeal.

TAX CUTS

Tax cuts are proposed that nakedly benefit only the wealthy and promise a ballooning deficit. Hundreds of billions are available for war while we are told there is “no money” for education or health care. Congressional leaders welcome deficits as a tool to further cut spending on human needs.

The FCC is moving to further deregulate media ownership. This regulatory permissiveness green-lights a further concentration of media control by a handful of corporations. The last wave of media deregulation allowed Clear Channel Communications to emerge as a near-monopoly in many radio markets. Now Clear Channel is sponsoring pro-war “Rallies for America” in cities across the country, a foretaste of what further deregulation will mean for our political discourse.

The list of what is at stake in this intensifying grab for power by the far right and the economic interests it represents can seem endless. It certainly threatens the democratic horizons of American citizenship.

The ostrich in each of us wants to deny the seriousness of the moment. This too shall pass. We’ll just wait it out or take a few cautious steps to register dissent. If we are patient, they will run out of steam. These are but a few of the many refrains that litter our critical judgment, offer cover and provide a basis for normalcy. But can normalcy be imposed on a political moment that propagates fear and uses it as a battering ram for anti-democratic and empire-building policies? I suspect not.



John Etheridge

American foreign and domestic policy are at a crossroads. As the only remaining superpower, America has to choose a future in relationship to both her own citizens and the rest of the world.

The road we are on today leads to an unending war against both the rest of the world and those Americans who are struggling to make ends meet. This may benefit a small fraction of American citizens in the short term. However, the drive for international domination will produce various forms of “blowback,” as it has in the past, and this will touch us all. The drive to yoke the rest of the world to American economic interests can only be enforced through an expansive and active military force and various forms of occupation.

At home, this will create intensifying social and class divisions that may become less and less tenable over time. The domestic cleavage and its potential aftershock will also accelerate the rush to a security state that polices citizen behavior and narrows the space for social dissent. These pieces, when assembled, will have the acrid odor of neo-fascism.

NOT INEVITABLE

None of this, however, is inevitable. Another road beckons, if we can see ourselves in reciprocal relationships nationally and internationally. We simply cannot go it alone. This other road demands a greater emphasis on diplomacy without the threat of warfare; a reinvigorated commitment to dissent and civil liberties; and redistributive economic investments at home and abroad. This road offers less of the illusory assurance of guaranteed outcomes that military intervention and exclusive reliance on market forces claim to provide. It demands a basic commitment to solving human problems with the resources, patience and conversation that we often dedicate to those whom we define as family or community.

We make such commitments in our

private lives because we understand that this investment of caring and attention is most likely to succeed. There is, of course, no guarantee. But we have no chance of success without a willingness to invest part of ourselves in a common fate with others. We need to take these lessons of private life and apply them to the public sphere. First, however, we will need to create more elastic and open definitions of community. We will need to take risks for people we have never met. For that to occur, each of us will need to consider what is at stake if we continue to embrace the illusion that we can protect our private lives without reconfiguring our relationship to the public.

CROSSROADS

Because we are at a crossroads, we need to actively resist the onslaught of policies that hurt so many people at home and abroad. Little can be won if we do not contest present policy. The courage to shed incapacitating denial and face the present threat, to visibly register dissent and risk some part of ourselves, has never been more necessary.

Unending warfare would likely destroy the very democratic institutions most of us wish to protect, and that most of us count on for a “normal” private life. Thus, developing road maps that connect our private lives to a public sphere is critical. Challenging American imperial prerogatives at home and abroad through the emerging peace and justice movement is essential if our legacy is to be anything more than the ash of democratic edifice. This will require surrendering time, resources, position and sometimes our comfort or security – because that is what it will take for us to win.

This is a moment of both great possibility and danger. Nothing is inevitable. To shift direction, for ourselves and our children, we must act now before it is too late.

Michael Fabricant is a professor at Hunter College and executive officer of the Ph.D. Program in Social Welfare at the CUNY Graduate Center, and a PSC Vice President for Senior Colleges.

The ostrich in each of us would rather not think about it.

POETRY

One by Billy Collins

Tomes

There is a section in my library for death and another for Irish history, a few shelves for the poetry of China and Japan, and in the center a row of reference books, solid and imperturbable, the ones you can turn to anytime, when the night is going wrong or when the day is full of empty promise.

I have nothing against the thin monograph, the odd query, a note on the identity of Chekhov’s dentist – but what I prefer on days like these is to get up from the couch, pull down *The History of the World*, and hold in my hands a book containing almost everything and weighing no more than a sack of potatoes, 11 pounds, I discovered one day when I placed it on the black iron scale my mother used to keep in her kitchen, the device on which she would place a certain amount of flour, a certain amount of fish.

Open flat on my lap under a halo of lamplight, a book like this always has a way of soothing the nerves, quieting the riotous surf of information that foams around my waist even though it never mentions the silent labors of the poor, the daydreams of grocers and tailors, or the faces of men and women alone in single rooms – even though it never mentions my mother, now that I think of her again, who only last year rolled off the edge of the earth in her electric bed, in her smooth pink nightgown, the bones of her fingers interlocked, her sunken eyes staring upward beyond all knowledge, beyond the tiny figures of history, some in uniform, some not, marching onto the pages of this incredibly heavy book.

*Billy Collins is a Distinguished Professor of English at Lehman College and is serving as United States Poet Laureate for 2001-2003. The poem above was previously published in *Sailing Alone Around the Room* (Random House, 2001). Collins’s latest collection is *Nine Horses* (Random House, 2002).*

Research at CUNY community colleges

By PETER HOGNESS

With nine classes to teach per year, it would seem almost impossible for community college faculty at CUNY to do serious research. Yet they do – and the variety and scope of their work is unique among community colleges nationwide.

Community colleges (CCs) are often defined as local institutions. The importance of their links to the surrounding community is reflected in the very name. Yet a large proportion of scholarship at CUNY's two-year institutions is international in scope.

A Hindu religious center in India, a Buddhist institution in Taiwan, and researchers at a Catholic college in upstate New York are working with BMCC psychologist Ting Lei to compare the process of spiritual transformation in different religions and cultures. "We will compare those who have just entered religious training with those who have been devotees for years, to see if they follow the same sequence," Lei explains. In past work, Lei has compared student motivation and achievement in the US and Taiwan.

AVANT GARDE

When Tony Pipolo of Queensborough CC was invited to Russia to do a seminar on American avant garde film, he was in some ways completing a circle. An editor of *Millennium Film Journal*, which focuses on experimental cinema, Pipolo discussed and presented films by several post-WWII American directors – Kenneth Anger, Maya Deren and Stan Brakhage – who themselves had been influenced by avant garde films made in Russia a generation earlier. "They looked back to all kinds of things developed by Eisenstein and other early Soviet directors in the 1920s," Pipolo says. "Especially the use of montage – not just telling a story in a so-called logical way, but using shots and juxtapositions in a way that provokes a certain reaction in the viewer." However, these Soviet cinematic pioneers – Dovzhenko, Vertov and others – had been out of favor for so long that students at the Moscow Film School, the oldest in the world, were largely unfamiliar with their work.

The American films Pipolo presented were even less familiar, but

Part I: The shape of things



Sue Dicker of Hostos does linguistic research in Washington Heights.

students responded to the power of the work. After he showed three short films by Maya Deren, he recalls, "this woman in the front row was weeping, audibly weeping."

Some CC research is profoundly international and at the same time profoundly local – for example, a recent study of English and Spanish usage in the Dominican community in Washington Heights, by Sue Dicker and Mahmoud Hafiz of Hostos Community College. "There's a common perception among English-

Connections between teaching and research flow in both directions.

speakers that Spanish-speakers [in the US] resist learning English," says Dicker, author of *Languages in America: A Pluralist View*. "The evidence shows just the opposite." Among Latino immigrant families, says Dicker, "the switch from Spanish to English usually takes place within one generation."

Dicker and Hafiz found a different pattern in Washington Heights. "Dominicans tend to use both languages," Dicker says. "They're learning English, they want to participate in English-language culture, but they're not giving up Spanish." Dicker links this trend to the patterns of Dominican migration to the US: "The Dominican Republic is so close that it's very easy to go back and forth. Kids are often sent back over the summer and of course they

need Spanish there." Modern communications also make a difference. "People carry their cell phones with them and get calls from a family member in Santo Domingo," Dicker says. "All this keeps the language alive." What has emerged among Dominicans in Washington Heights, she says, is "a transnational identity."

As a public university in a city of immigrants, CUNY is a natural base for such inquiry. The CUNY context is also close at hand, in another sense, in the work of Yi-Chun Tricia Lin at BMCC.

CARIBBEAN COMPARISON

"My students really helped me look at my research material differently," says Lin. "They helped change my research orientation from being an Asian Americanist to a much more comparative approach." The experience of having so many Caribbean American and Latino students in her classes, Lin explains, "led me to the idea of comparing Pacific Islander and Caribbean literature." In 1999, Lin was a fellow at a National Endowment for the Humanities summer institute at the University of Hawai'i, and used it for an in-depth examination of Pacific Islander literature. At subsequent conferences she has linked up with other scholars doing comparative work on these two island regions. Last year Lin received another NEH grant and did further research in New

Zealand – or Aotearoa, as the Maoris call their home.

As chair of the biology department at Bronx CC, John Davis knows what CC faculty can do in scientific research. Past work in his department has dealt with microbial metabolism, neurohormones in rats, and tumor development in fish in the Hudson River. And as former chair of the CUNY Research Foundation's Faculty Advisory Council, Davis knows just how difficult it is. "To do research in the sciences you need a grant of at least \$100,000 or \$200,000," he says, and the grad students and lack of facilities at the CCs make such work even harder. "It's only with tremendous motivation and commitment on the part of certain faculty members that it's possible at all," Davis says. Many work with labs at CUNY senior college campuses or private medical schools.

Most scientific research projects at CUNY CCs focus on student training and development. "Teaching is more central to the mission of a community college," notes Davis. "That's what's beautiful about CCs: faculty who are completely devoted to teaching and their students, but still committed to maintaining research activity. What some at a four-year college may view as a weakness, or something less than what they are doing, I view as just the opposite."

In 1986, when Clara Wu first asked students in her chemistry class at LaGuardia if they'd like to do some research, Wu recalls, "I only expected about six students, out of 48, to volunteer. Thirty raised their hands. I said, 'Wow, what hap-

pened?' They told me, 'We never had this kind of opportunity before.'" Today Wu directs the National Institutes of Health "Bridges to the Future" program at LaGuardia, which recruits 24 students to conduct research each year.

Describing a similar program at BCC, Davis notes that many CC students are the first in their families ever to attend college. "They might not have dreamed of becoming scientists until they saw a flyer for the program on campus," he says.

A focus on teaching is something that CUNY community colleges have in common with CCs across the country. But being part of a research university makes CUNY CCs different from most, even unique, in their closer integration of teaching with research.

This is not simply a result of University-wide standards for tenure and promotion (though those standards are very much on the minds of new CC faculty as they struggle with the teaching load). Research is what CUNY community college faculty have trained for: 63% of full-time faculty at Queensborough, for example, have PhDs, compared with 18% at public community colleges nationwide. CUNY CC faculty do research both to satisfy their own scholarly curiosity and because it enriches what they bring into the classroom.

BOTH WAYS

The link between teaching and research flows both ways. Tricia Lin's classes at BMCC not only helped change the direction of her research – she also draws on her scholarship to challenge her students.

In a recent English literature class, Lin used a Samoan novel that she describes as "a young woman talking back to Margaraet Mead." The students found its pidgin English difficult, and they let her know it. "The first week they complained that it was impossible," she says. "The second week it got better. By the third week they were loving it, and at the end they all said I should definitely use that book again." Lin says this in a phone interview, but you can hear the smile in her voice as she remembers. "To teach what I study," she says, "it's very inspiring."

Next: *Grappling with the obstacles*



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Each one, reach one

This month's 15-Minute Activist asks you to do something more challenging than a phone call or a letter: talk with a colleague and persuade him or her to come with you to Albany on May 3, for the statewide March for Public Education (see p.7).

Talk with a co-worker who might need a nudge or some encouragement to make the trip, someone with whom you usually talk about your de-

partment, your discipline, your students. Have a conversation about how work you do at CUNY would be affected by Pataki's budget cuts, and what we can do to stop them.

It's not an easy time to go to Albany, near the end of semester with papers to grade. But it will make a vital difference to our future. And if you invite a colleague to come with you, it could turn a "maybe" into a "yes."