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Dear PSC Member:

I am pleased to present for your consideration a summary of the proposed collective bargaining agreement between the Professional Staff Congress and the City University of New York. The proposed contract comes with the unanimous endorsement of the union's Executive Council and the overwhelming vote of the Delegate Assembly. On their behalf, I urge you to give it your support.

Enclosed with this letter is a summary of the agreement prepared by the union. The legal document memorializing the contract settlement, the Memorandum of Agreement, will be mailed on July 29 to all members eligible to vote on ratification. It is also available on the PSC website: www.psc-cuny.org. In addition, the union is publishing a special contract edition of *Clarion*, which will include the full text of the memorandum, as well as answers to frequently asked questions, details of the ratification process, and more.

The union's strategic priorities

One reason for the high level of support the proposed contract has received is that it delivers gains in almost every area prioritized by the union for this round of bargaining. First, it provides salary increases that make some progress toward competitive salaries at CUNY, even at a time of intense budget constraints for the City and State. The proposed contract, if ratified, will increase salaries across the board by 10.5% by October 2009 and provide additional increases to the top salary steps. Crucially, the proposed contract also preserves our salary steps—which Chancellor Goldstein sought to eliminate—so that people moving up the salary steps will receive both step increases and contractual increases. With this contract, the top step of the salary for the Professor and Higher Education Officer titles rises to \$116,364; the top step of all annual salary schedules with steps receives a 6.1% increase in October 2009, and the top step of all adjunct titles increases 8.75%. Many people moving up the salary steps will receive even larger percentage increases over the life of the contract, as a result of the step and across-the-board increases combined.

There are other important features of the proposed agreement, such as additional salary increases to advance toward equity for Lecturers, College Laboratory Technicians and Assistants to HEO. The higher percentage increase for adjuncts on the top step is also a move toward closing the salary gaps that develop when strictly percentage-based raises are applied.

The proposed settlement breaks new ground in other areas, too. It includes a pilot project on student mentoring and a fund for paid parental leave—a first for CUNY and one of the union's major goals for this contract. In addition, all full-time faculty and staff will be entitled to use three sick days each year for care of an ill family member, and to participate in two new programs that allow us to use sick days collectively to help colleagues in need.

Meanwhile the PSC-CUNY award fund is increased, the Adjunct Professional Development Fund is renewed, the HEO/CLT Professional Development Fund is continued, and eligible

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adjuncts will benefit from a series of improvements in access to tuition waivers, movement in salary steps and health insurance. A major victory is a separate agreement to create another 100 new Lecturer positions reserved for experienced CUNY adjuncts. And separate negotiations have also produced an agreement on doctoral employee health insurance—a real breakthrough, especially in the current economic climate.

One of the most important gains of this contract is non-economic: the union won the right to the use of all college e-mail facilities for union communication. If you remember that this year one college tried to ban union activists from using college e-mail for union messages, you will understand why this change matters.

CUNY's attempt to centralize power

Equally important is what is *not* here: through intense organizing and with almost universal support, the union sent the message that we would not sign a contract that restructured CUNY as an increasingly corporate university. We defeated Chancellor Goldstein's demands for elimination of salary steps, removal of department chairs from the bargaining unit, weakening of HEO job security, undermining of tenure and introduction of "performance pay." The one significant provision that originates in a management demand is the creation of a new "Clinical Professor" title, a full-time faculty position with one-year appointments up to a maximum of seven years. While the union recognized a need in certain fields for a clinical title, we refused to allow the proliferation of untenured positions. The new Clinical Professor position and the current Distinguished Lecturer position are capped at a total of 125 combined, University-wide.

The major disappointment of the proposed contract is in the area of job security for long-serving adjuncts. The 100 new Lecturer lines reserved for adjuncts and the enhancements in adjunct eligibility for certain contract provisions are genuine improvements, but they are not systemic job security. There are adjuncts at CUNY who have taught faithfully for fifteen or twenty years, and who are then dismissed without warning or explanation. No courses to teach means no income and no health insurance. Despite strenuous advocacy at the bargaining table and through the contract campaign, CUNY refused to change this grossly unfair system. This is the system CUNY *wants*. One challenge for the next round of negotiations is to enlist the entire union—not just a handful of activists—in the fight to change this unjust system.

Let's start the campaign for the next contract by becoming fully informed about the proposed contract for this round and voting yes on ratification. The "paybill" legislation necessary for our contract has already passed in Albany and been signed by the governor; all that is needed now is our vote. Ballots and complete voting information will be mailed on July 29 to members eligible to vote, and votes must be cast by September 2.

Every good thing in this contract was possible only because of member support; each of you who worked for this agreement should be proud.

In solidarity,

Barbara Bowen
President