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UNION REPRESENTING CUNY FACULTY AND STAFF ANNOUNCES NEXT MOVE IN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS AT MASS MEETING

Faculty and Staff Working Without Contract for Three Years. What's Next For Union?

New York, September 29th, 2005 - More than 1,200 City University of New York faculty and staff gathered today for a meeting at The Cooper Union Great Hall to discuss the next steps towards settling a contract with CUNY management. The meeting organized by Professional Staff Congress - the union representing 20,000 faculty and staff - is a milestone in what has been a long and arduous contract negotiation process with CUNY management. On the agenda: the action plan to settle a fair contract with CUNY Management.

“This is a critical moment in negotiations with CUNY management,” said PSC president Barbara Bowen. “So far, the negotiations have not yielded an equitable settlement. Faculty and staff have worked without a contract since 2002 and without a raise since 2001. Tonight I announce the union’s plan for bringing the negotiations to a successful close in the coming month.”

In a hall filled to capacity with instructional staff members representing all 20 CUNY colleges, PSC leadership announced:

- They will work tirelessly during the next month with management to achieve a settlement that meets the needs of members.
- On November 3rd, the PSC Executive Council will determine whether there is a realistic framework for a settlement.
- If not, the PSC Executive Council will decide whether and when to hold a referendum seeking membership support for a job action.
- The referendum would be a secret ballot, tallied by an independent third party.

PSC has a commitment from 300 hundred organizers who will speak one-on-one with members before the November 3rd deadline to answer questions about negotiations and a possible referendum.

Union member Tom Shemanski of Queensborough Community College said, “This contract is a very important one for us. Management wants to take away our benefits and give less than a cost-of-living increase. They wish to pay less than needed for Welfare Fund coverage and benefits. We will never be able to maintain a quality educational institution without proper support.”

More...

CUNY faculty and staff are public servants. CUNY overwhelmingly serves the working class, people of color and new immigrants of New York City. PSC is concerned that there is a very clear and present political agenda to dismantle the public sector by steady erosion of the salaries and benefits of public servants. In this instance, the most impacted are the least who can afford it – CUNY faculty and the students they serve.

“Education is a human right and basic element of a functioning democracy,” said Ashley Dawson, a faculty member at College of Staten Island. “The governor, mayor and management’s refusal to grant CUNY faculty and staff a decent contract is an assault on this fundamental right and an attack on the entire social fabric of our city.”

In over 40 bargaining sessions leading up to today’s meeting, PSC negotiators have sought for its membership: Salary increases consistent with inflation, increased contributions to the PSC/CUNY benefits fund and improvement in working conditions that have deteriorated over decades.

“What we’re fighting against when we refuse substandard wages, benefits and conditions for ourselves is a substandard future for our students,” said Ms. Bowen.

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Barbara Bowen, President of Professional Staff Congress, is available for press interviews.

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About PSC

The Professional Staff Congress is the union that represents more than 20,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York (CUNY). It is dedicated to advancing the professional lives of its members, enhancing their terms and conditions of employment, and maintaining the strength of the nation's largest, oldest and most visible urban public university.

The union negotiates, administers and enforces collective bargaining agreements; protects the rights of staff through the grievance and arbitration process; engages in political activity on behalf of CUNY and its staff and students; and advocates for the interests of the instructional staff in its various forums. It also provides benefits and services to its members through such related organizations as the PSC/CUNY Welfare fund and New York State United Teachers (NYSUT).