

# Clarion

NEWSPAPER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS / CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



SEPTEMBER 2011



## TIME TO ACT Speaking up

PSC members' views on the adjunct health care crisis. **PAGE A4**



# SAVE ADJUNCT HEALTH CARE

Monday, September 26. Baruch College at 4:00 pm. Be there to join colleagues from across CUNY as the PSC launches its campaign to push the University to do what's right. At the moment 1,700 adjuncts – our colleagues – risk losing their health insurance

next summer as the University's funding for their health insurance has failed to meet rising costs. Adjunct faculty need health care, and CUNY must meet its obligation as an employer. But first CUNY must hear from all of us. **PAGES A1-A4**

## MICROMANAGERS

### How CUNY went corporate

UFS Chair Sandi Cooper writes that 80th Street's move to assert control over curriculum marks a further takeover of CUNY by a managerial ideology. **PAGE 7**

## RETIREMENT

### An expert in your corner

Jared Herst joined the PSC in June as the union's new coordinator of pension and health benefits. Meet Jared and other new PSC staff. **PAGE 5**

## PUBLIC SECTOR

### Union battles in three states

Labor and its allies in Wisconsin, Ohio and Florida continue to organize, mobilize and push back against union-busting Republicans. **PAGE 8**



## PENSION CLAIMS

### Liu reports, you decide

Mayor Bloomberg claims public sector pensions will bankrupt NYC. But a recent report from City Comptroller John Liu says otherwise. **PAGE 4**

## CALENDAR

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 / 4:00 pm:**  
Protest to save adjunct health insurance! See page 1.

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 3 / 1:00 - 3:00 pm:**  
Retirees Chapter meeting. PSC President Barbara Bowen will speak on "the State of the Union." All PSC members are welcome. PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th floor.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7 / 8:30 am - 3:00 pm:**  
Defending Public Higher Ed. The percentage of CUNY's operating budget covered by student tuition and not public investment is expected to grow over the next five years as a result of tuition increases structured into the State budget. Discuss this and other key issues of the growing crisis of public education and CUNY. Proshansky Auditorium, CUNY Graduate Center, 34th Street at 5th Avenue. Free and open to the public. Info at [defendingpublichighereducation.commons.gc.cuny.edu](http://defendingpublichighereducation.commons.gc.cuny.edu) or e-mail [defendpubhied@gmail.com](mailto:defendpubhied@gmail.com).

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18 / 6:00 pm dinner, 6:30 pm meeting:** First CLT Delegate Meeting. Baruch College, Vertical Campus, 55 Lexington Avenue at 24th Street, room 8210. RSVP to Alisa Simmons at [asimmons@pscmail.org](mailto:asimmons@pscmail.org) or 212-354-1252.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21 / 6:00 pm:** Labor Goes to the Movies presents Frederick Wiseman's *High School* (1968). Wiseman's documentary of a Philadelphia high school quietly presents the effects of institutional education and the inevitable clash of generations. Filmed in the late 1960s, the movie will resonate with anyone who has ever been to high school. Wiseman's simple style offers a "fly on the wall" sensation as we witness parent-teacher conferences, sex education lectures, gym classes and even a home economics beauty pageant.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25 / 5:30 - 9:00 pm:** In Defense of the Social Safety Net. Join the union-wide campaign to educate about and protect Social Security, public pensions and Medicare/retiree health care. There will be a talk by keynote speaker Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, and discussion from distinguished panelists James Parrot (Fiscal Policy Institute), Kim Phillips-Fein (NYU) and Frances Fox Piven (Graduate Center). SEIU 1199 Auditorium, 310 West 43rd Street.

**THROUGH OCTOBER 28:** The Struggle for Free Speech at the City College of New York 1931-42. An exhibit of photographs, graphics, and cartoons documenting student and faculty activism at the City College of New York in the 1930s spawned by the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe. Open Mon.-Fri. noon until 8:00 pm; Sat. 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, now through Oct. 28. CCNY Center for Worker Education, 25 Broadway, 7th floor. Info from [carolsmith@ccny.cuny.edu](mailto:carolsmith@ccny.cuny.edu).



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006.  
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# In a rich city, why is CUNY poor?

● In the fight to save adjunct health insurance, no one should believe that New York is too poor to afford a solution. The amount of money required is not large compared to CUNY's overall budget, and fixing this problem is mainly a matter of political will.

The overall underfunding of CUNY is also the result of deliberate policy choices, and there are several possible revenue sources that could be accessed to end it. For example, slightly increasing the personal income taxes on New York's wealthiest residents, or decreasing the amount of property tax abatements the City gives to large real estate developers, or closing tax loopholes that benefit hedge funds. Taking these actions would raise hundreds of millions annually, providing more than enough revenue to pay for adjunct health care, as well

as give all PSC members the salary increases they deserve.

**Michael Spear**  
Kingsborough Community College

## Lessons in solidarity

● After six days on strike as a faculty member at Long Island University [see p.4], I send my heartfelt thanks to members other unions, particularly the CWA Local 1105 members who came to encourage us on the picket line. They were out on strike for two weeks and succeeded in making Verizon come back to the negotiating table. They were full of energy, wearing bright red T-shirts and bringing us pizza and donuts. They distributed sheets with their union chants on them, borrowed our megaphone and taught their chants us. They galvanized the whole picket line for the time they were there.

When I walked by the Verizon picket line on Montague Street a few weeks before our strike at LIU, I waved and gave the strikers a thumbs-up and made sure not to cross the picket line. It didn't occur to me to bring them food or to join them on the picket line, not even for 15 minutes out of my day. I have been humbled by the generosity of these workers who came to help us out of solidarity. I will be signing petitions to support their cause and will look for future opportunities to become more involved with labor issues.

**Sophia Wong**  
LIU Faculty Federation  
AFT Local 3998

## Unions yes, Cuomo no

● I want to congratulate you on the summer issue of *Clarion*, par-

ticularly the contributions on the subjects of the Board of Trustees and the trashing of New York State workers by the New York Legislature and our despicable governor.

With every day that goes by I feel so grateful to be represented by our union; strong union membership is just about the only path left to any kind of equality and civil society in the United States. I voted for Cuomo holding my nose. I understood his support for gay marriage as a "no cost" political gain for his national ambitions and I wouldn't vote for him again under any circumstances. I can't wait to see how the Democrats jockey around Cuomo's presidential run in 2016, and I look forward to reading every word in *Clarion* about the upcoming 2012 elections.

**Joan Gregg**  
Retirees Chapter

## LABOR IN BRIEF

### Grain on the tracks in West Coast port protest

Hundreds of West Coast long-shore workers shut down port facilities in Longview, in southwest Washington, when a multi-company group called EGT Development violated a port contract by using workers who are not long-shore union members. About 10,000 tons of grain were dumped out onto railroad tracks during the September 1 protest, and 19 people were arrested.

In other protests at the port over the summer, members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) blocked railroad tracks and occupied the port's rail terminal. More than 100 union members have been arrested in the hard-fought campaign, which the

union says is a battle to stop non-union operations from gaining a foothold in West Coast ports.

### CSEA members ratify contract by 60% to 40%

Members of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), the largest union of New York State employees, ratified a contract that included significant concessions on pay and benefits. In results announced in mid-August, members approved the agreement by a margin of roughly 60% to 40%. A little less than half of CSEA's 66,000 members took part in the mail ballot.

The new agreement includes no wage increases for the first three years, and a 2% increase in the fourth and fifth years of the five-year deal. Nine unpaid furlough days will also be imposed, four of which will later be paid back.

Gov. Cuomo had threatened layoffs of nearly 10,000 workers if concessions were not approved.

## Spotlight on Two October PSC Forums

**Oct. 7 – Defending Public Higher Education**  
8:30 am – 3:00 pm

Proshansky Auditorium, CUNY Graduate Center, 34th & 5th  
A critical discussion on the consequences of state disinvestment in higher education. (See Calendar at left for details.)

**Oct. 25 – In Defense of the Social Safety Net**  
5:30 pm – 9:00 pm

SEIU 1199 Auditorium, 310 West 43rd Street  
A forum keynote speaker Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research. (See Calendar at left for details.)

## Rockin' the boat



At the Sept. 10 Labor Day march, PSC members distributed 3,000 leaflets in support of striking workers at the Boathouse Restaurant in Central Park. Above, PSC President Barbara Bowen and Lenny Dick of the Bronx CC chapter talk with a young striker, a former student at City Tech who could no longer afford tuition after he was fired for union activity. See [www.BoycottTheBoathouse.com](http://www.BoycottTheBoathouse.com) for updates on the strike.

## Carl Williams remembered

By CLARION STAFF

John Jay Chapter Chair Carl Williams died unexpectedly August 7, following a short illness. He was 50 years old.

Born in Grenada, Williams migrated to the United States where he pursued his passion for education. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Baruch College, going on to doctoral studies at Columbia University's Teachers College. Williams joined the John Jay faculty in 1994, where he became a much-loved counselor in the SEEK program.

Dedicated to his students, Williams was known for encouraging them to set high goals and excel. He was also an effective union leader who fought for better working condi-

tions for PSC members at John Jay. "I loved Carl and had great respect for his political courage," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "What everyone noticed first was that smile, but Carl also had a backbone of steel."

"The loss of Carl Williams will be difficult for many members of our community to fathom," John Jay President Jeremy Travis wrote in an August message to the college. Travis wrote that Williams had "touched hundreds of lives" in his work at John Jay.

Williams is survived by Diane, his wife of 22 years, and his two children, Andre, 16, and Janelle, 20. Those wishing to donate to a college fund established for Williams's children should contact the John Jay College provost's office.

# 9/11: PSC members reflect & remember

By JOHN TARLETON

Clarion spoke with five PSC members about their reflections on the September 11 attacks and the aftermath, looking back from a decade later.

## Salar Abdoh

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH  
CCNY

The morning of 9/11 Salar Abdoh was teaching a class in BMCC's Fiterman Hall. "There was a very loud noise, but not so loud you'd think something had blown up," he told *Clarion* in 2001. "You hear loud noises a lot in New York City." Out the window, "We saw paper being blown down the street, but it didn't register."

When Abdoh and his students were told to leave the building, they entered a crowded and confusing scene outside. "When we saw people falling, that's when some students really started to lose it," he recalled soon after. "They just started weeping." Abdoh took one student, particularly upset, and turned her to face away from the scene.

After the second plane hit, Abdoh found himself thinking, "You have come to live in the time of your own fiction." That's because his 1999 novel *The Poet Game* had imagined a second attack on the World Trade Center, a sequel to the bombing attempt in 1993. The novel's premise, he said, was "a group of Muslim radicals trying to draw America into a protracted war in the Middle East."

An adjunct in 2001, Abdoh is now an associate professor of English at City College. He recently completed a political novel and is considering writing a nonfiction work about the Middle East and North Africa. Ten years after 9/11, Abdoh says most Americans only dimly understand terrorism and its underlying causes.

"One only has to travel a bit in place like the Persian Gulf, where the glut of oil money has brought in Westerners in a feeding frenzy, while you have laborers in a place like Dubai essentially toiling in modern-day slavery. How is a man in such a situation supposed to feel? These situations are real and they exist and they are far from the consciousness of the average American. And for these reasons terror will not go away any time soon. I don't condone it, obviously, but I'm aware of this as an observer."

Abdoh published another terrorism-related thriller in 2004 but says he is done with the genre. After a

## In memory of...

Six people from the PSC bargaining unit lost their lives in the 9/11 attacks:

**Andrew Fredericks**, a member of the New York Fire Department (FDNY) Squad 18, taught fire service hydraulics as an adjunct at John Jay.

**Charles Lesperance** was Director of Information Technology at Hostos.

**Charles Mauro**, director of purchasing for Windows on the World, taught

## Many responses to tragedy



Rebecca Weiner (above) resumed teaching at BMCC three weeks after 9/11.

while he started declining interviews related to 9/11, not wishing to be defined by his sudden reputation as an oracle on the subject of Islamic extremism.

"There was a whole army of people who suddenly became 'experts' about Islam or terror or the Middle East," said Abdoh, who was a teenager when he came to the US from Iran. "I was loath to be a part of this bandwagon. So I've tried to keep a low profile in that respect."

## Rebecca Weiner

LECTURER, ENGLISH  
BMCC

Rebecca Weiner has taught English at BMCC for more than a quarter century. For many years, she enjoyed a familiar sight when she left the campus at night.

"I used to love to come out of class and see the Twin Towers all lit up," she recalled. "It was beautiful, in a futuristic way."

BMCC was closed for three weeks after 9/11. When classes resumed, Weiner and her students were breathing Ground Zero's smoldering wreckage daily while walking to and from the Chambers Street subway stop. On the other side of BMCC, directly across West Street, clouds of dust rose up as tons of World Trade Center (WTC) debris were transferred from trucks to barges. "You could see the

as an adjunct in City Tech's hospitality management program.

**Shawn Powell**, a member of FDNY Engine Company 207, had worked as a theater technician at LaGuardia.

**Prokopios Paul Zois** taught tourism and hospitality courses as an adjunct at KCC.

**Andrew Zucker**, associate at the law firm of Harris Beach, taught continuing studies in criminal law at Baruch.

wind coming up and blowing it back at us," Weiner told *Clarion*.

The polluted air affected Weiner and many others at BMCC. Students in her classes dropped out because coming to class aggravated their asthma. Weiner herself had problems with throat and eye irritation. Her doctor found she had reduced lung capacity for a couple of years following 9/11, and for a time she had to take anti-asthma medication.

"There was something invisible affecting us," she said. While those working in recovery and cleanup efforts on "the pile" had far worse exposures, Weiner still wonders if the pollution she inhaled during that time may take a greater toll in the future. "I feel like there are effects that will come up because we were down there every day," she said.

## Steven Markowitz

PROFESSOR OF BIOLOGY  
QUEENS COLLEGE

Long after the toxic dust cloud from the collapse of the Twin Towers subsided, one group of cleanup workers remained largely invisible in Lower Manhattan – immigrant day laborers cleaning office buildings and apartment towers, who often worked without proper safety equipment. That began to change after Professor Steven Markowitz and staff from Queens College Center for the Biology of Natural Systems joined with community groups to establish a mobile testing center, which provided free check-ups for potentially affected day laborers. In five weeks, the mobile unit screened 418 people. More important, said Markowitz, the project drew widespread media attention to the plight of day laborers working on or near Ground Zero.

"The need was there," he told *Clarion*. "We felt we should step in and help."

A specialist in occupational and environmental medicine, Markowitz has since continued to monitor health outcomes for WTC workers on a larger scale. He now directs a clinic at Queens College that tracks 2,500 police officers, paramedics, laborers and others under the WTC Medical Monitoring Program – part of a larger ongoing study of 30,000 workers being monitored under the program. (The Fire Department of New York has a separate program to monitor more than 10,000 firefighters.)

After catastrophic exposure to pollutants, Markowitz told *Clarion*, most people either die or fully recover. But an unusually high percentage of WTC workers – 10% to 20% – have had long-term health problems. Common ailments include damage to the upper and lower respiratory tracts, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and post-traumatic stress disease (PTSD).

Whether heart disease or various cancers can be linked to exposures around Ground Zero is a question that's drawn increased attention, especially in the debate over the scope of the federal Zadroga Bill on medical needs of cleanup workers and first responders. On September 8, Markowitz was named to a 15-member federal advisory committee that will evaluate the scientific and medical evidence and offer recommendations on WTC-related health conditions.

## Fran Geteles

SEEK COUNSELOR, RETIRED  
CCNY

Many survivors of 9/11 who worked at or near the World Trade Center were traumatized by the experience. At the same time they found themselves grappling with practical problems such as loss of work and trouble getting in touch with coworkers or union representatives.

PSC retiree Fran Geteles helped to field phone calls at the NYC Central Labor Council for a week following the attacks. "I was the only psychologist in the room," she recalled, "so when it was clear the problem was psychological, then they would ask me if I would take the call."

Geteles's first goal was to help people relax on the phone "so we could talk about practical things they could do" such as reconnecting with friendship circles or, if necessary, turning off the television and the constant replays of the 9/11 carnage that filled the airwaves. If the caller's problem was more profound, Geteles would encourage the caller to visit a psychotherapist. Geteles was also among more than 250 PSC members who responded to an early call for volunteer counselors from the United Fire Officers' Association, though that need was later filled through a more structured program.

While many individuals were able to get therapy, Geteles told *Clarion* she thinks the US as a soci-

ety has failed to collectively process the trauma of 9/11. "The desire for revenge has been the most powerful part of our reaction," she said.

For many years Geteles had worked on psychological evaluations of torture victims from other countries – so she was especially concerned to see torture become a routine practice of the US government in the wake of 9/11.

**Union members used skills to heal & spread knowledge.**

Geteles has spoken about the evils of torture to future professionals at

law schools and medical schools. She is also active in a campaign to get New York to become the first state to approve legislation that would make it possible to revoke the medical licenses of medical professionals who design, oversee or carry out torture. Supporters of the effort include the New York State Psychological Association and a range of other professional associations.

"The decimation of our values and our Constitution should be on our radar screen," said Geteles.

## Mehdi Bozorgmehr

PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY  
CCNY & GRADUATE CENTER

CUNY's Middle East and Middle Eastern American Center (MEMEAC) is the only one of its kind in the country that combines the study of the Middle East and of the Middle Eastern diaspora in the United States. Officially approved by CUNY one week before 9/11, the Center quickly found its work in great demand.

A grant from the National Science Foundation allowed MEMEAC Co-director Mehdi Bozorgmehr and Associate Director Anny Bakalian to conduct an in-depth study on how Middle Eastern American communities were responding to the government repression that followed 9/11. The resulting book, *9/11 Backlash: Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond*, won recognition from the American Sociological Association when it was published in 2009.

"Many people have chronicled the abuses suffered by these communities, but few have reported on how they responded," Bozorgmehr told *Clarion*. "After 9/11, these groups moved from using disassociation and 'passing' as coping strategies and took the bull by the horns and began organizing to address their problems," Bozorgmehr said. "That's a huge leap."

Bozorgmehr, who came to the US from Iran in the early 1970s, hopes to write another book following up on the study's findings. Meanwhile MEMEAC, launched ten years ago, now brings together more than 70 CUNY faculty who do Middle East-related studies and holds almost 40 public events per year.

"We've really grown," Bozorgmehr said. "We've been very, very busy."

# City pension costs to decline after 2016

By PETER HOGNESS

## Comptroller, mayor clash

A report from Comptroller John Liu on City pension costs drew ire from Mayor Michael Bloomberg in an August interview. But Bloomberg's criticism was short on specifics, and the comptroller challenged him to back it up.

Liu's report concludes that pension costs will make up a declining part of City spending starting in five years' time. "City pension costs will peak in 2016 before they begin a gradual, steady decline," the comptroller's office said.

### STOCK MARKET

"Poor market performance over the past decade means we still have a few tough years ahead as those investment losses catch up to us," Liu told reporters. "However, significant reforms already implemented in recent years will drive down costs for decades to come."

The report was at odds with the picture painted by Mayor Bloomberg, who has argued that public worker pensions will bankrupt New York City unless there are major cuts in future benefits. When the *Daily News* editorial board asked the mayor about the disagreement,

Bloomberg said the comptroller "doesn't know what he's talking about," and should go back and "do a real analysis."

"The research and the facts may be inconvenient to the administration – but they are what they are," responded Deputy Comptroller Alan van Capelle. Liu's professional background includes 14 years as a pension actuary.

The comptroller's report, titled "Sustainable or Not? NYC Pension Cost Projections Through 2060," cautions that it is not intended as an exact prediction or a crystal ball on the stock market's future – especially not over a five-decade period. "The next half century will most likely contain boom times and asset bubbles, recessions and market panics, just as past decades have," it says. "The actual course of economic and fiscal events will undoubtedly diverge from the smooth, straight-line projections presented here." The report aims, it says, to give "a baseline projection" for how pension costs can be expected to affect the City budget, based on current pension rules, historic eco-

nomical trends and analysis by independent actuaries.

The comptroller's report projects that:

- over the next five years, pension costs will rise from 11.1% to 11.4% of the City budget;
- after 2016, pension costs will decline over the next three decades to between 5% and 6% of the City budget;
- a projected decrease will mainly be due to long-term effects from pension plan changes already adopted in recent years.

The analysis was carried out as part of Retirement Security NYC, a joint effort of Liu's office, the National Institute on Retirement Security (NIRS) and the New School's Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis (SCEPA). "Inflammatory rhetoric cannot serve as a substitute for the real facts," said Liu in announcing the partnership, which has issued three reports since it was established last March. (See [comptroller.nyc.gov/rsnyc](http://comptroller.nyc.gov/rsnyc).)

Both the Mayor and Governor Andrew Cuomo have used current budget deficits to sound the alarm

over public worker pension costs, which they say are unsustainable. Cuomo has put forward his own plan for slashing State pensions for new employees, which the Legislature is expected to consider this fall. (See *Clarion*, Summer 2011.) In 2009, the PSC fought against a proposed "Tier 5," then-Governor Paterson's plan to cut future pension benefits, and won.

PSC-CUNY instructional staff were not included when the measure passed. The union has noted that Cuomo's proposed cutbacks would harm CUNY's recruitment efforts, while providing virtually no help with current budget deficits.

### FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

Bloomberg has emphasized the recent growth in the City's annual pension costs, with its required annual contribution rising from \$1.5 billion to about \$7 billion during the past decade. But an analysis issued by Liu in April concluded that this growth in costs was mainly due to the decline in stock market performance, particularly in the crash of 2008. "The data challenges widespread notions that overly generous benefits played the leading

role in the escalation of City contributions," said Deputy Comptroller Simcha Felder. "Lower-than-expected investment returns accounted for 48% of the cost increase."

### Don't substitute rhetoric for facts, says Liu.

The comptroller's latest report projects that the lower returns of recent years will gradually be made up as the market goes through periods of better performance. For example, the comptroller's office announced in July that in the previous fiscal year, New York City's five main pension funds achieved a 20% rate of return – their best in 13 years. Since then the market has headed in the other direction, but Liu says that this is exactly the point: pension policy decisions need to be made based on a long-term view, not an overreaction to short-term changes.

Liu has praised Bloomberg's performance in some areas, such as the City's response to Hurricane Irene. But on their disagreements over pension costs, he urged the mayor to focus more on the data. "We don't see any reports from the mayor's office," said the comptroller. "We see a lot of talk and one-liners, but where are the reports backing up those statements?"

# Strike wins new contract at LIU

By PETER HOGNESS & ARI PAUL

## 'An imperfect victory'

Faculty at Long Island University's Brooklyn campus ended a six-day strike after ratifying a new contract agreement on September 12. Wage increases are lower than in their previous contract, but more than management had offered before the job action. "It's an imperfect victory," said journalism professor and strike captain Ralph Engelman. A strike at LIU's C.W. Post Campus on Long Island resulted in a similar agreement.

Members of the Long Island University Faculty Federation (LIUFF) walked off the job at the Brooklyn campus after the administration refused to budge on proposed salary freezes and a plan to tie faculty pay to tuition revenue. Management's proposal called for no wage increases in the first two years of the five-year contract, Engelman explained – and base pay increases in later years would have wholly or mainly depended on how much tuition money came in.

### PROFIT SHARING?

"The faculty was very uncomfortable with this, a corporate model of profit-sharing," Engelman told *Clarion*. The union attributed the overwhelming vote to strike to the administration's hard-line stance over the summer, when it canceled negotiation sessions and threat-

ened a lockout if the union didn't acquiesce to its terms.

"They backed off on that, but that was the spirit and tone of the administration," Engelman said. Strikers' health care coverage was canceled when the strike began, another sign of management's aggressive approach.

### Union pushes back against management's hard line.

The walkout was highly effective, shutting down the vast majority of courses. Engelman said 95% of classes weren't held.

The new contract provides no raise in the first year, followed by a 1% base pay increase in year two, a 1.5% increase in year three, and a 2% increase in the remaining two years of the five-year deal. In each of the last four years of the agreement, faculty could also receive lump-sum payments of between 0.5% and 2% of salary if tuition revenue rises by 3% or more.

Having any link between pay, even a lump-sum, and tuition revenue "was probably the most contentious issue among the faculty," said Melissa Antinori, assistant director of the writing program in LIU's English Department and a member of the LIUFF negotiating team. If this "contingent cash" in fact becomes available, the agreement gives faculty members the option to contribute it instead to a student scholarship fund. Some

faculty strongly opposed to the pay-tuition link said they would do so.

The contract has some significant other gains – including the first-ever paid office hour for LIU's adjunct faculty: one paid office hour for those who teach more than nine contact hours per semester. "The threshold's a little high, but it's a foot in the door," said Antinori.

"Hopefully we can bring it down in the future." Management will also provide matching contributions for adjunct pensions, another first.

The union won a cap on non-tenure-track appointments, known at LIU as NTTA positions, which cannot exceed 15% of all full-time faculty lines. Full-time, non-tenure-track jobs are the fastest-growing category of academic employment in the US today. Antinori, who holds an NTTA post herself, says the limit is

an important step for strengthening job security at LIU.

The agreement was ratified in a mass meeting by a vote of 142 to 41. The strike was the seventh in the history of the LIU union, which includes both part-time and full-time faculty. The strike at LIU's C.W. Post Campus in Brookville was conducted by the C.W. Post Collegial Federation, which includes full-time faculty only. An agreement there with similar terms was ratified September 11, by a vote of 80 to 15. Adjuncts at C.W. Post are represented by CWA Local 1101, with a contract that does not expire until 2013.

Underlying the immediate issues in the LIU strikes is a broader conflict over university priorities. Faculty pay was 25% of the university budget 10 years ago but is 14% today, according to the LIUFF. "There's been a great expansion of the administration bureaucracy," Engelman said.

### LACKLUSTER BOARD

Though LIU's board is heavily weighted toward the corporate world, the union faults the university for lackluster private fundraising efforts. The faculty group notes that in the school's 2011-2012 budget, less than 1% of revenue is projected to come from outside fundraising, compared to 91% from tuition.

PSC members showed up to support the strike at LIU. Members walked the picket lines with LIU strikers, and First VP Steve London spoke at a LIUFF rally. "This was a fight against austerity," said Costas Panayotakis, associate professor of political science at the nearby campus of City Tech. "Many of the issues are similar to those we face at CUNY."



Faculty members Laura Koenig and Brook Stowe on strike at Long Island University.

# ADJUNCT HEALTH CARE

FROM CLARION, NEWSPAPER OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS / CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

SEPTEMBER 2011

## A campaign that we can win

Dear Members,

This special section of *Clarion* is dedicated to the union's campaign to prevent the loss of health insurance for CUNY adjuncts. The campaign may be the most important the PSC has waged in a generation. The urgent and irreducible issue, of course, is access to health care for hundreds of our colleagues. But the stakes are high for all of us, whether we are full professors, retirees, higher education officers or assistant professors just starting a career at CUNY.

Across the country unions and public employees are coming under fierce, ideological attack and seeing their salaries and benefits gouged. The PSC must send the message that a concession such as the loss of health insurance is unacceptable – whether for any of us or all of us. As members of an academic community we should also demand that our university stand for something other than exploitation of its most vulnerable workers.

### EVERYONE'S ISSUE

In late August, the 1,700 adjuncts who currently receive health insurance through CUNY – generally the adjuncts who have taught most and taught longest – received a letter informing them that unless an alternative source of funding or additional funds are made available, their health insurance will be discontinued one year from now.

The news was obviously catastrophic for those who received it. In a country still without universal health care, loss of health insurance can be literally a matter of life and death. But even those of us not directly affected should be stirred to action. If CUNY goes unchallenged when it allows health insurance for any of its employees to fail, the University will be “emboldened,” as Distinguished Professor Rosalind Petchesky remarks in this section, “to compromise the rights of full-time workers.” One look at the massive concessions for public employees in New Jersey, Ohio and New York in the last few months tells us that this is not an idle threat. New York's largest statewide union, squeezed by Governor Cuomo's threat to lay off thousands of its members, just ratified a contract that increases the cost of health care and actually reduces salaries because of furloughs.

### BROADER PICTURE

Brooklyn College adjunct Brian Pickett, also quoted in this special section, makes a key point: “It's important to understand how the potential loss of adjunct health care coverage at CUNY fits into a broad-

## PSC tells CUNY: “Do the right thing”



Adjunct lecturer Alice Zinnes helps a student in her design class at City Tech. Part-timers teach half of all CUNY's classes.

er climate of austerity measures being enacted around the country.”

The campaign to save adjunct health insurance is the PSC's anti-austerity campaign, a continuation of the union's intense battle last spring against budget cuts to CUNY and our ongoing fight for a fair contract. Contract negotiations in this round have moved slowly – a result of the difficulty of both State and City budgets. The union's contract priorities, however, remain unchanged, including increased salaries, reasonable teaching loads, promotion for professional staff, and adjunct job security. But given the economic climate, the PSC has approached negotiations largely through informal talks and discussion of non-economic issues. It's the approach that makes most sense right now, and it has allowed us to make some real progress.

The issue of adjunct health insurance, however, cannot wait. Hundreds of our colleagues face losing a life-sustaining benefit, and the countdown to the date for the potential end of health insurance next August has already begun. We have one year to engage CUNY in finding a solution. If the union can prevail in this tough campaign we will emerge much stronger for every other issue that faces us, including our contract fight. Taking a stand against concessions may be less glamorous than fighting to break new ground, but it is at least as important, now and historically. As students of history we should not be surprised that

the threat of concessions comes first to our lowest-paid colleagues and those with the least job security.

CUNY has put adjunct health insurance at risk by dramatically increasing its use of adjuncts while refusing to increase the funding it provides for their insurance. Since 2000, the number of adjuncts teaching at CUNY has nearly doubled, rising from 6,258 in Spring 2000 to 11,450 in Spring 2011. The number of full-time faculty has also increased over that period, but far less quickly than the number of adjuncts. Adjuncts now teach a larger share of CUNY courses than they did five years ago – they now teach more than half.

### CUNY FALLS SHORT

At the same time that CUNY has increased the number of adjuncts, the cost of their health insurance has skyrocketed from \$3,264 per person per year in 2002 to \$8,061 per person in 2011. With both the number of participants and the cost of insurance exploding, the total cost of health insurance for CUNY adjuncts is now four times what it cost in 2002.

Yet CUNY has refused since 2003 to change its contractual contribution for adjunct health care. The University provides an unchanging \$2.8 million annually for adjunct health insurance – regardless of the number of adjuncts participating or the cost of the insurance itself. That makes no sense, economically or ethically. Health insurance for the small portion of adjuncts who qualify is now shamefully underfunded:

CUNY's contribution covers only 20% of the cost.

That's why the Welfare Fund, through which adjunct health insurance is provided, made the painful decision that adjunct health insurance cannot be sustained with CUNY's current level of funding. Because the PSC and the Welfare Fund, on whose Board the PSC has the majority appointment, have a commitment to maintaining adjunct health insurance, the Welfare Fund has done everything it can to stretch existing funds, cut costs and keep the benefit afloat. But with an 80% gap in funding and shrinking reserves with which to cover it, the Welfare Fund had no choice but to decide as it did.

CUNY officials will argue that the University has met its contractual obligation for funding of adjunct health insurance. That's true. But what's also true is that CUNY has absolutely refused to change the contract to match the reality of the University's use of part-time labor.

### STRUCTURAL DEMANDS

The PSC has bargained aggressively on this issue, demanding in every round of contract negotiations that CUNY change the structure of adjunct health insurance funding. CUNY has steadfastly refused, and agreed only to temporary infusions of funds or partial fixes. But with the current intense pressure on the cost of the benefit, the temporary measures and infusions of funds are no longer enough.

## What you can do

### ● Protest at the CUNY Board of Trustees

On Monday, September 26, at 4:00, at Baruch College, join with other PSC members to demonstrate in support of adjunct health coverage at the first CUNY Board of Trustees meeting of the semester. E-mail Brian Graf at [bgraf@pscmail.org](mailto:bgraf@pscmail.org) to let us know you'll be there!

### ● Send a letter and sign the petition

We need your signature on both the letter and petition to CUNY. You can sign both today, at [tinyurl.com/AHI-letter](http://tinyurl.com/AHI-letter) and [tinyurl.com/AHI-petition](http://tinyurl.com/AHI-petition).

### ● Share your story

If you're an adjunct who receives health insurance from the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, or a full-timer who thinks CUNY should fully fund health insurance for adjuncts, we want to hear from you! Go to [tinyurl.com/AHI-adjunct-story](http://tinyurl.com/AHI-adjunct-story), or [tinyurl.com/AHI-solidarity](http://tinyurl.com/AHI-solidarity), and let us know what you've got to say.

*The only solution is the simple solution: treat adjuncts, especially those who contribute most to the work of the University, like the core part of the faculty they are. Provide health insurance for eligible adjuncts on the same basis that health insurance is provided for full-timers. That's what's done at SUNY, where adjuncts who meet eligibility requirements much like ours receive the same health coverage as their full-time colleagues. The University may believe its own PR and think of CUNY as an institution populated only by star senior faculty, but the truth is that there would be no CUNY without adjuncts. Distinguished Professor of Finance Terry Martell, who also writes in this special *Clarion* section, comments, “We have seen part-time faculty become a central part of the University's teaching resources.”*

### ADJUNCTS ARE FACULTY

CUNY's willingness to use adjuncts to do most of the University's teaching and unwillingness to treat adjuncts like faculty is the real problem. The threat of losing adjunct health insurance is only a symptom. But it is a life-threatening one.

I believe the PSC can move CUNY to solve this issue, and we must. Few of us could look our adjunct colleagues in the face a year from now and know that we did not do all we could to save their health insurance. The campaign has already begun. Become part of it by joining me in a show of support at the CUNY Board of Trustees meeting on September 26. It's the right thing to do—and the life we save may be our own.

In solidarity,  
Barbara Bowen

# A Welfare Fund trustee's perspective

By **TERRENCE MARTELL**

This summer, the trustees of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund reluctantly concluded that the financial structure for adjunct health insurance coverage had become unsustainable. At the July 25 Board meeting, the Welfare Fund Trustees passed a resolution to discontinue the current adjunct basic health insurance program as of August 31, 2012, unless sufficient and permanent funding or an alternative benefit source is secured. The program would be replaced by substantially reduced benefits commensurate with available funding. The resolution cited the explosive growth over the past decade of both the cost per member and the number of members covered – all in the face of an unchanging, flat contribution from the City University of New York.

## INCREASING SHORTFALLS

It was a wrenching decision because the trustees are aware of the dramatic impact on many people's lives if the problem is unresolved at the end of this time period. On the other hand, it was the only responsible course of action.

The Welfare Fund is the product of a Trust Indenture and Tripartite Agreement among the Fund, the union (PSC) and the employer (CUNY). It operates as a trust established under New York State law and is subject to a plethora of federal, state and local regulations. Trustees are vested with a fiduciary responsibility to act only in the best interests of all Fund participants and make all reasonable efforts to maintain the solvency of the Fund. That

## A structural change is needed

responsibility is both a legal and a practical one: a Fund that ran out of money would do no one any good.

In recent years interim measures have allowed the Board to maintain the adjunct benefit in anticipation of the bargaining parties (PSC and CUNY) attaining a longer-lasting solution. Our recent decision is a recognition that the situation is unsustainable without immediate structural revision. To continue the benefit under present circumstances would be a breach of our fiduciary responsibility.

The adjunct basic health insurance provided by the Welfare Fund is unique among the 100+ supplemental New York City welfare funds. Most City welfare funds cover only things like optical, dental, and prescription drug benefits: no other City fund has to provide basic health insurance for a major part of the workforce. Since the late 1980s there has been a failure by both CUNY and the City of New York to recognize the full health insurance rights of these part-time workers. The PSC leadership at the time (1986) negotiated a contribution from CUNY for adjunct health care to be administered, not by the New York City Employee Benefits Program, but by the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund. The arrangement has been honored by the trustees ever since, although with increasing concern.

In 2003, the current PSC leadership negotiated an increase to the University's flat-sum contribution, but was unable to win CUNY's

agreement to an arrangement where contributions would rise with enrollment levels and insurance premiums. The increased contribution reduced the shortfall to \$600,000 in 2003. However, the shortfall increased each subsequent year and is projected to be \$11 million in 2011.

The Fund cannot continue to cover the shortfall without jeopardizing the benefits of all participants.

Trustees have taken a number of financial measures to keep the Welfare Fund operational. In 2003,

there were significant changes: moving to mail order for prescription drugs, switching to a low-cost NY-SUT life insurance plan, and benefit reductions to extended medical coverage. The adjunct component also took cuts: co-pay increases in 2005, a negotiated shift of 180 doctoral student/adjuncts to the NYSHIP system in 2009 and some unilateral insurer reductions in 2011. All of these measures have only served to stave off the inevitable. It is projected that as of August 31, 2012, without adequate remedial action, the Fund will face insolvency within 12 months.

## COMMITMENT NEEDED

Those of us who have spent our careers at CUNY have observed the increased reliance of the University on adjunct faculty, who now provide half of all instruction. We have seen part-time faculty become a central part of the University's teaching resources. What the Welfare Fund trustees have not seen is a commit-

ment to provide the basic rights of health insurance to eligible members of this enormous component of CUNY's workforce.

## TOUGH CHOICES

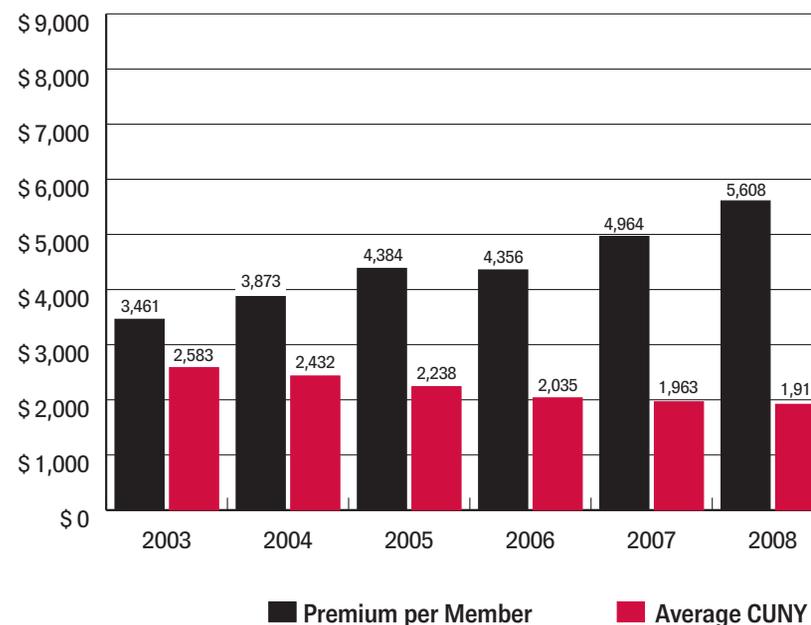
The management of the Fund and the advice of legal counsel, benefits consultants and auditors have been consistent through this period. The Board has been kept fully apprised of the deteriorating financial situation, and the Fund's management has handled it in a conscientious and ethical manner. The PSC-CUNY New York Welfare Fund is one of the few Welfare Funds to have an independent audit committee, and the

audit committee concurs with the Board's decision. Beyond the measures already taken, there is little more the Fund can do other than urge the bargaining parties (CUNY and the PSC) to find answers.

As individuals and colleagues we regret having to take this measure. As trustees of the Fund, we had no other responsible alternative.

*Professor Martell is chair of the Audit Committee of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund. He is the Saxe Distinguished Professor of Finance at Baruch College and Director of the Weissman Center for International Business.*

Adjunct Basic Health Insurance Premium per Member & Average CUNY Contribution



# FAQs on adjunct health insurance

## What is the campaign for adjunct health insurance about?

The campaign is about preventing a core part of the CUNY workforce from losing an essential benefit. CUNY depends on adjunct labor, yet fails to fulfill the employer's basic responsibility of providing health insurance for eligible adjuncts. As CUNY has expanded its reliance on adjunct faculty, it has covered less and less of the cost of adjuncts' health insurance. Now the portion covered by CUNY is only 20%.

CUNY must fulfill its responsibility as an employer: the University cannot run on adjunct labor and then pretend that the adjunct labor force does not exist. To be effective teachers, all faculty need decent medical care. The campaign for adjunct health insurance is ultimately about what kind of employer CUNY is – and what kind of university.

## Why did the Welfare Fund trustees decide that adjunct health insurance would be discontinued unless an alternative funding source is found by August 2012?

Adjunct health insurance was won in 1986 as part of the union contract; since then it has been provided through the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund and funded by CUNY. But CUNY's funding falls dramatically short of the actual cost. In every round of contract negotiations since the present leadership took office, the PSC has demanded that eligible adjuncts receive health insurance from the same source as full-timers to put adjunct health coverage on a more secure foundation. But for ten years, CUNY has refused to adjust the contract to match the reality of its use of adjunct labor or engage seriously with the PSC to seek alternative ways to provide adjunct health insurance.

As the University has continued to expand its reliance on adjunct labor, the number of adjuncts eligible for health insurance has skyrocketed. The cost of coverage has increased even faster. The total cost of the benefit is now 400% of its cost in 2002, but CUNY's annual contribution has remained unchanged.

When the funding gap was smaller, the Welfare Fund was able to manage it through a combination of administrative efficiencies, restructuring adjunct health insurance and other benefits, and drawing on the Welfare Fund's reserves. But after sharp increases in recent years, the funding gap is now too large to close with stopgap measures. If no changes are made, within the next two years the deficit created by CUNY's underfunding of adjunct health insurance will be larger than the Welfare Fund's entire reserve. The Trustees concluded they had no alternative, and

acted on their fiduciary responsibility in a resolution adopted on July 25. (See page A2.)

## Why can't the Welfare Fund solve the problem by spreading more of the cost among all participants rather than causing the lowest-paid employees to lose health insurance?

Because the shortfall in CUNY's funding for adjunct health insurance is now so large that no amount of benefit-cutting, up to and including eliminating all other benefits for full-timers and retirees, would solve the problem. Even if every other benefit were cut, within six fiscal years the projected cost of adjunct health insurance would be larger than the entire current income of the Welfare Fund – and adjuncts would still not be fully covered. Trying to subsidize CUNY's refusal to meet its basic responsibility as an employer would devastate

all other benefits and still fail to secure adjunct health coverage. The problem is structural, and a structural solution is required.

## What do you mean by a "structural solution"?

A structural solution would be a plan for adjunct health insurance that increases funding as the number of eligible participants or the cost of the insurance rises. The ultimate structural solution to the issue, of course, would be to end CUNY's reliance on underpaid part-time labor and achieve enough public funding for a full-time faculty workforce. Within the current funding basis for CUNY, however, the solution would be simply for the employer to provide health insurance for eligible adjuncts on the same basis that health insurance is provided for full-timers, through the New York City Health Benefits Program.

# Save adjunct health care

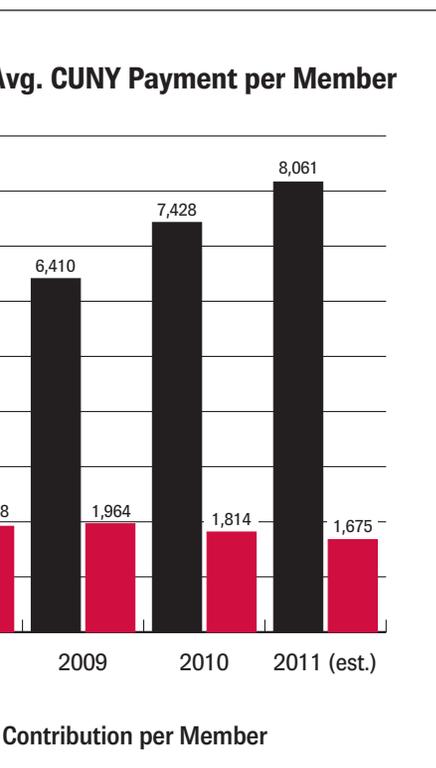
By **MARCIA NEWFIELD**

PSC Vice President for Part-Time personnel

A nightmare scenario has arrived at our doorstep. Seventeen hundred adjuncts (and more to come) could lose their health insurance come next September due to the rising costs of health insurance, the low contribution by CUNY, and the City's failure so far to include CUNY adjuncts in the municipal health insurance plan.

## TIME TO FIGHT

The magic word here is "could" – it doesn't have to be. The PSC is



mounting an intense campaign to save adjunct health care. The PSC is *you*, and that doesn't mean just adjuncts. Everyone – full-timers, retirees, students, alumni, you name it – anyone associated with CUNY should realize that this is a problem for all of us.

Why? Because a good university has to maintain certain minimum standards. Being an effective teacher requires decent medical care: this is a bottom line that any university of quality should instinctively respect.

When the conditions of employment are degraded, it adds fuel to the fires traversing this nation and destroying workers' rights. Adjunct working conditions (low pay, lack of job security) are already bad enough. The PSC has been fighting to improve them – pushing uphill against CUNY's resistance to non-economic as well as economic demands. Is 80th Street now going to say, "CUNY faculty can do without health insurance"? The whole University community needs to come together to say, "No – we will not accept this."

## OUR RESPONSIBILITY

CUNY blames the union and everybody blames the State and City for underfunding public higher education. But this is not a time to pass the buck – it's a time for action to solve an urgent problem. We have to think of the issue in a new "frame," as George Lakoff would say – a framework that puts our collective money where our values are, or should be. After

all, adjunct faculty help students develop their potential, feed their curiosity and contribute more to the world – and that work deserves support.

That's what this health insurance crisis is about. Providing health insurance is not a frill; it's a basic obligation of any decent employer. CUNY has achieved so many innovative solutions to so many problems. This university can use its political capital to create conditions of which we can all be proud – not ashamed.

How, then, do we turn this threat around? We can create a tsunami of employee and public and student expression. If every adjunct speaks to a full-timer and a student, and every full-timer joins with students and adjuncts to speak to legislators, our voices will be heard.

## COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

Some PSC members may balk at talking to a stranger. The way adjuncts are treated as peripheral, even though they are the majority of CUNY faculty, can be a barrier. But now is the time.... We can and must reach out and work together in solidarity. We have to be as persistent about this as we are with our students when we encourage them to fight hopelessness and overwork, and help them to build new achievements.

Undermining adjunct working conditions affects department life and the conditions that full-timers face – ask any deputy chair how much they depend on adjuncts. Many full-timers have worked as



Adjunct Jenna Lucente teaching at City Tech.

adjuncts themselves. We are each other's colleagues – and it's time to stand up together and acknowledge that.

Our collective strength will surprise us. The Board of Trustees rally on September 26, is just the beginning.

That's what's done for other New York City employees, and what's done at SUNY. City employees who work half-time or more receive the same health insurance as employees who work full-time, and SUNY adjuncts who meet eligibility requirements very similar to ours receive the same health insurance as SUNY full-time faculty and staff. A similar plan should be implemented at CUNY.

## How many adjuncts work at CUNY, and are they all eligible for health insurance?

Relatively few are eligible. In the Spring 2011 semester CUNY employed 13,198 teaching and non-teaching adjuncts. Only 13% (or 1,721) received adjunct health insurance through the Welfare Fund. Those who receive health insurance are often long-term adjuncts whose entire income derives from teaching at CUNY and who have taught at the University for many years.

The majority of adjuncts, however, do not qualify for coverage; they have full-time jobs elsewhere, or are retirees or graduate employees – usually with access to other sources of health insurance. To

be eligible for health insurance through the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, an adjunct must have taught at CUNY for at least two consecutive semesters and teach at least six hours in the third semester. Further, adjuncts must maintain at least a six-hour load per semester to remain eligible and may not be covered by other primary health insurance. (A small number of non-teaching adjuncts are also eligible, see the contract's Article 26.6.) Despite these stringent eligibility rules and a one-year waiting period, CUNY's increasing use of adjunct faculty means that the number receiving health insurance has increased by 61% since 2002.

## What should I do if I am an adjunct currently receiving health insurance?

Above all, you should join the campaign to demand that CUNY take responsibility for providing this benefit. Health insurance is critical for everyone, and for some it is a matter of life and death. The union leadership will ask the entire PSC membership to fight with you.

The union has a year to succeed in moving CUNY to take responsi-

bility, and we believe we can do it. But health insurance is a matter of survival, and you are likely to have an immediate need for information. The PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund staff will be able to help you with questions such as what would happen if health insurance were discontinued, what a severely reduced benefit would look like, or other questions. Call the Welfare Fund at 212-354-5230 or visit the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund website.

## Why don't adjuncts receive health insurance through the same plan as full-time faculty and staff?

Good question. In the 1980s, through negotiations, City employees who worked half-time or more started receiving the same health insurance coverage as full-time employees. If the full-time workweek was 40 hours, an employee had to work at least 20 hours a week to qualify. The agreement did not include adjuncts at CUNY. Shortly after this agreement was reached, and under intense pressure from organized adjuncts at CUNY, the University and the PSC agreed in 1986 to purchase health

insurance for eligible adjuncts through the Welfare Fund with funding from CUNY.

## Why is the gap between the funding CUNY provides and the cost of adjunct health insurance so large?

Because CUNY has in the past refused to work with the PSC to seek alternative forms of providing adjunct health insurance or change its contractual obligation to reflect the University's growing use of adjuncts and the benefit's actual cost. In every round of contract negotiations since the present leadership took office, the PSC has demanded that eligible adjuncts receive health insurance from the same source as full-timers. The PSC won a small increase specifically for funding adjunct health insurance in 2002, but since then CUNY's funding for adjunct health insurance has remained unchanged – despite huge increases in both the number of eligible adjuncts and the cost of insurance. In subsequent years, the PSC and CUNY negotiated additional lump-sum and recurring increases to bolster the Fund's general revenue, but these could not

cover the structural deficit caused by the imbalance in basic funding. Between July 2002 and July 2011, the number of adjuncts in the plan increased from 1,067 to 1,721, and the per-person annual cost went from \$3,264 to \$8,061. CUNY's contribution now covers only 20% of the total cost.

## CUNY officials have said that the PSC should work with CUNY on a solution; is the union willing to do so?

Absolutely. For 11 years, the PSC leadership has tried to do just that. In every round of contract negotiations since 2000, CUNY has refused union proposals for a structural solution. As the approaching crisis for the Welfare Fund became apparent, the union leadership briefed the CUNY administration and urged the University to act. The PSC leadership believes the issue of adjunct health insurance can be resolved, and we are eager to work with CUNY to achieve a solution. In recent years the PSC and CUNY have solved many difficult issues through working together; the union stands ready to do so again.

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# Faculty views on the crisis

**Jenna Lucente, City Tech**  
ADJUNCT LECTURER, ART & DESIGN

I have been an adjunct at City Tech for the past seven years. I am one of those people who truly loves teaching. I enjoy the intellectual stimulation in preparing courses and challenging my students, and I thrive on watching the students learn, grow and build confidence in themselves. I truly believe good education can build a better society, and I want to be a part of it. One of the main reasons I am able to make it as an adjunct – and when I say make it, I mean live with an income of under \$35K a year – is that I know my health benefits are taken care of. For all of myself I give to my school, my students and my department, I feel this is only fair.



**Stuart Chen-Hayes, Lehman**  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, COUNSELOR EDUCATION/SCHOOL COUNSELING

Our graduate program in Counselor Education/School Counseling would not exist without the outstanding contributions of part-time faculty. They work long hours, teach great courses, advise, and grade just like the rest of us, but only get paid a fraction of what full-timers make. That's unfair to

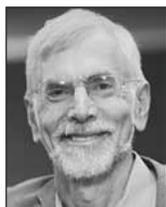


## Voices united across CUNY

begin with. But as a full-timer who has access to health care coverage, I stand in complete solidarity with my part-time colleagues who deserve the same coverage.

**Nicholas Freudenberg, Hunter**  
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, URBAN PUBLIC HEALTH

CUNY's public mission obliges us to set a higher standard than private businesses for how we treat our faculty and staff. Taking away health insurance coverage for adjunct faculty would be a step in the wrong direction.



**Renee Mizrahi, Kingsborough CC**  
ADJUNCT LECTURER, ENGLISH

I began teaching at CUNY about nine years ago. On February 8, 2008, I received a kidney transplant because I was fortunate enough to have adjunct medical coverage. In order to stay alive, I must continue to take immunosuppressant medication for the rest of my life. The cost of my medication is well beyond what I could afford on my adjunct salary. Reducing the amount of coverage would mean that I, and other



adjuncts, won't have access to the medication or quality medical care that we may need. Allowing this to happen would be the 21st century equivalent of an "order of execution" for many hardworking adjuncts.

**Rosalind Petchesky, Hunter**  
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR, POLITICAL SCIENCE

The source of the problem is the two-tier labor system and the CUNY administration's unwillingness to treat adjuncts as educators with equal rights. To deny adjuncts health care is just wrong. You walk down the hall and share space with people who are being heavily exploited. On a practical level, the more CUNY can exploit part-time workers, the more the University is emboldened to compromise the rights of full-time workers.



**Arlene Geiger, John Jay**  
ADJUNCT LECTURER, ECONOMICS

I've been teaching economics at John Jay since 1992. I teach three courses each semester plus one in the summer. I've been committed to my students, the college



and my discipline. To face being left without health insurance at the age of 63 is outrageous. John Jay is my only employment. Although I'm in reasonably good health, at my age with my adjunct income, I would be priced out of the health insurance market. I would have no access to preventative care or exams, and could only turn to the emergency room for emergency care at public expense. The union needs to make an all-out effort on this issue and it must be our first priority. I will be at the Board of Trustees meeting on September 26.

**Linda Principe, CSI**  
ADJUNCT LECTURER, ENGLISH

I began my teaching career as a person with a debilitating disease that I still battle every day of my life. Because adjunct teaching is part-time, I can handle the hours and I have been able to build a successful career in spite of my disability. What would losing my benefits mean? I would probably have to give up my teaching career to go back on disability because I cannot afford to pay (wholly) for my benefits, nor can I afford to be without them. All in all, losing my benefits would be disastrous and have far reaching consequences for me. After 24 years of service, it is profoundly sad I should even have to be facing this prospect.



**Brian Pickett, Queensborough CC & Brooklyn College**

ADJUNCT LECTURER, SPEECH AND THEATER

It's important to understand how the potential loss of adjunct health care coverage at CUNY fits into a broader climate of austerity measures being enacted around the country. Everywhere benefits and pensions are being cut, social services reduced and student tuition is rising. This is about much more than preserving health insurance for a small sector of public employees. It is about realigning our priorities and demanding adequate funding for the public infrastructure we all rely on.



**Paul Washington, Medgar Evers**  
ASSOCIATE HEO, MALE DEVELOPMENT & EMPOWERMENT CENTER

This is another assault on labor. Adjuncts teach the majority of classes at CUNY and for them to not have health care coverage is wrong. We want CUNY and the City to get involved. It's chump change in the overall scheme of things when you're talking about \$14 million to fund adjunct health care in an annual City budget of \$66 billion and a State budget of \$132.5 billion.



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### What exactly is the Welfare Fund?

The PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund is a trust established under New York State Law to provide supplemental health benefits at CUNY. Supplemental health benefits are those that supplement basic health insurance: prescription drugs, dental care, optical care, hearing aids and more. Since 1986, the Welfare Fund has also been responsible for providing health insurance to eligible adjuncts using funds provided by CUNY. It is highly unusual for a welfare fund to cover basic health insurance, as ours does for adjuncts. The PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund receives its income from the employer, CUNY, and its membership includes CUNY management employees as well as faculty and staff represented by the PSC. The Welfare Fund trustees, who have fiduciary responsibility for the Fund, decide on expenditures in conformance with the Fund's Summary Plan Description, which may be modified periodically. The Welfare Fund's website ([pscunywf.org](http://pscunywf.org)) has more information.

### Does any of the income of the Welfare Fund come from union dues?

No. Union dues pay for union activities: filing grievances, negotiating the contract, fighting for

## FAQs on adjunct health insurance

increased CUNY funding, organizing contract campaigns, advocating for legislation beneficial to PSC members, etc. The Welfare Fund is funded through contributions by CUNY under terms negotiated in the contract.

### Why did the Welfare Fund spend resources on adjuncts when CUNY does not provide full funding for their health insurance?

Because it's the right thing to do. We are all part of one workplace, one university. The Welfare Fund operates on the premise that the Fund's income is negotiated on our collective behalf and is for our collective use. That's the premise of all shared health funds. Some of us need more expenditure by the Welfare Fund one year, some another. A member may use almost no prescription drugs for 20 years, and then in a single year need thousands of dollars of drug therapy. The Welfare Fund is there to cover that cost.

The Welfare Fund has operated the same way with adjunct health insurance costs. As the deficit created by CUNY's underfunding began to grow, the Fund treated it

as a shared expense; the Welfare Fund negotiated reductions in the cost of adjunct health insurance itself, further reduced its already low administrative costs, and spread a portion of the cost among the 34,000 participants eligible for Welfare Fund benefits.

The Fund was also able to draw on increased contributions negotiated for all City welfare funds by the Municipal Labor Committee, on increases negotiated by the PSC with CUNY in 2004 and 2006, and on a \$30-million reserve negotiated by the PSC and CUNY in 2006. But such measures are no longer enough: the operating deficit caused by CUNY's underfunding of adjunct health insurance has now grown so large that it threatens to overwhelm the entire Welfare Fund budget.

### The PSC has been pressing this issue for years; is there any reason to hope that it can be solved now?

Yes, though these are obviously difficult times in which to negotiate. One important change is that after extensive discussions initiated by PSC President Barbara

Bowen, CUNY management representatives have acknowledged the importance of the issue. The PSC also has a track record of working with CUNY management to gain equitable health insurance. In 2008, in a side agreement to the contract, CUNY and the PSC established that doctoral students at the CUNY Graduate Center would be eligible for health insurance on the same basis as doctoral students at SUNY. The PSC is committed to using every resource at its disposal to reach a comparable agreement for adjuncts, but CUNY must also take an active role in reaching a solution. The strength of the whole union will be needed to win this; we will need the voices of tenured and untenured, faculty and staff, full-time and part-time together.

### I want to be part of this campaign! It's a life-and-death issue for adjuncts, and it goes right to the heart of what kind of university CUNY is. What can I do?

Great! We need every member of the University community to participate. Right now, send a message to CUNY Chancellor Matthew

Goldstein and Board Chairperson Benno Schmidt demanding that CUNY fulfill its basic responsibility to its workforce. Then, join the hundreds of your colleagues who have already signed a petition that can be presented publicly, with the same message.

Most important, make a commitment to attend a demonstration for adjunct health insurance at the CUNY Board of Trustees' first meeting of the academic year: Monday, September 26, at 4:00 at Baruch College. The Trustees need to hear that making CUNY take responsibility for adjunct health insurance is a priority for the University's whole faculty and staff. More demonstrations and actions will follow, escalating if needed, to press for a solution.

If you want to play a part in shaping the campaign, contact PSC organizer Brian Graf at [bgraf@pscmail.org](mailto:bgraf@pscmail.org). No issue is more fundamental than the right to health care, and this may be one of the most important campaigns the union has ever waged. We need everyone who cares about justice, who cares about what the University stands for, to get involved.

# New pension & benefits coordinator comes to PSC

JOHN TARLETON

Jared Herst grew up talking shop with his father, a forward-thinking financial planner who left his job as a broker in the 1970s to establish a firm of investment advisors for financial and retirement planning. His clients included employees at Princeton University.

"I saw my dad do comprehensive financial and retirement planning for individuals and how it helped better people's lives," recalled Herst, who took over in June as the PSC's new Coordinator of Pension and Health Benefits, replacing Clarissa Weiss who recently retired after holding the position for 27 years.

Herst, 38, comes to the position with 16 years of experience in the financial services industry. He most recently worked for five years as a pension consultant at TIAA-CREF, which provides retirement benefits to thousands of PSC members and to academics, medical researchers and employees of nonprofits across the country.

## CUNY BACKGROUND

At TIAA-CREF, Herst served members at four CUNY campuses – John Jay, Medgar Evers, Hostos and Lehman – as well as at NYU and Columbia. Herst visited CUNY campuses regularly, meeting with PSC members and working closely with college human resources departments.

"Working with these institutions for several years has helped me better understand the needs and goals of our membership," said Herst, who will visit CUNY campuses throughout the coming year at the invitation of PSC chapter chairs.

"I worked with Jared for years while he was at TIAA-CREF," said Weiss. "He's very knowledgeable, and also easy to get along with. I'm confident he'll take good care of our members' needs – and that lets me enjoy my own retirement!"

New York State law calls for full-time members of CUNY's instructional staff to participate in a retirement system – either the New York City Teachers' Retirement System (TRS), a defined-benefit plan, or the Optional Retirement Program (ORP), a defined-contribution plan in which participants choose either TIAA-CREF or an alternate funding vehicle offered by Guardian or MetLife.

CUNY adjuncts, who are only eligible to be enrolled in the Teachers Retirement System (TRS), become vested after completing five years of total credited service. For adjuncts participation is voluntary, but Herst strongly urges adjuncts to sign up. "Adjuncts should take advantage of this," he said. "It's a way for them to build up a pension for themselves." Since the employer also contributes, those who don't sign up are essentially leaving money from CUNY on the table, he said. (Adjuncts wishing

## Former consultant at TIAA-CREF

to learn more should contact Herst or Ellen Balleisen at 212-354-1252; Balleisen has been counseling part-timers about TRS for several years in the PSC.)

Herst says preparing for retirement is a long-term endeavor that should get some regular attention. He noted that the union's job is not to advise individual members on exactly how to invest the money, but rather to help them understand the full range of options and how to develop a plan that works best for them.

"Don't be shy about your questions," Herst said. "We are here to serve members at every stage in their career at CUNY, and after they retire, so they can make informed decisions."

In addition to Herst, there are five other members of the union's professional staff who are new this year. "It is exciting to add able and experienced staff as some staff retire and others move on to new opportunities," said Deborah Bell, PSC Executive Director.

Fran Clark came on board as Communications Coordinator in February. He works with the PSC leadership to disseminate the union's message to members, elected officials and the general public. "I'm also a resource for chapters, committees and union activists," Clark said. Clark knows the CUNY system and the politics of higher education well: he previously worked for 10 years as higher education program coordinator at the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), which has chapters on 20 campuses.

## TEAMWORK

Ida Cheng started as Assistant to the President in July. Cheng, who has a master's in public administration from NYU, is working with President Barbara Bowen on research and policy issues, and on internal communications. She has previously worked as a researcher at SEIU 1199 on that union's campaign to organize long-term care providers, and as a consultant to the Annenberg Institute for School Reform. "This is the perfect convergence of my interest in public education and labor rights," Cheng said.

## Meet Jared Herst, and other new staffers.

Organizer Sarah Hughes also joined the staff this summer. Hughes previously organized graduate assistants at the University of Massachusetts, where she was a student in UMass Amherst's master's program in labor studies and vice president of the Graduate Employees Organization, part of UAW Local 2322. "I'm finding the switch from leadership to staff really interesting," says Hughes.

"The PSC Organizing Department is very collaborative, and it's been a great learning experience." At the PSC, she'll be working with chapters at City Tech and other campuses.

Coordinator Arsenia Reilly, who began work at the PSC at the start of this semester in organizing and contract enforcement, is the organizer for the newly formed Research Foundation chapter, whose 700 members won their first contracts last spring. Reilly will also work with the Contract Enforcement Depart-



Jared Herst fields a phone call at the PSC Central Office.

ment to make sure that members' rights under those contracts are fully respected. With a master's degree from Rutgers in labor studies, Reilly's ten years of experience in the labor movement includes directing contract administration staff on grievances and contract campaigns, and internal organizing at SEIU 1199-NJ. "I have a one-year-old-son, Declan, who, like me, enjoys picket lines, rallies, protests, labor songs and chants," Reilly told *Clarion*.

Jonathan Vandenburg joined the Organizing Department in mid-

September. After earning his BA in history at Yale, Vandenburg spent six years working in the Strategic Campaigns Department at the United Steelworkers union. His wife, Raisa Rexer, is working on her PhD dissertation in French literature at Yale. "I'm married to an academic and I come from a union family," said Vandenburg. "My dad is the president of an IBEW manufacturing local outside of Pittsburgh. "I'm honored to work for a union that is an anchor of the struggle for economic justice in New York City."

# Midterm tenure review?

By PETER HOGNESS

Last semester the PSC filed both a grievance and a Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) complaint against CUNY's unilateral attempt to impose a new process of midterm tenure review, without negotiating with the union.

Basic due process in the evaluation of a junior faculty member's progress toward tenure is protected by the collective bargaining agreement between the PSC and CUNY. The union contract does not govern matters of academic judgment, but it does provide some essential guarantees of fairness in the tenure process, so that junior faculty will not be subject to ad hoc procedures or after-the-fact requirements.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

In February, the Board of Trustees approved a new policy calling for administrators such as deans

## PSC files grievance

or college vice presidents to undertake a review of the work of junior faculty members at the end of their third year. "The contract already speaks to the subject of evaluations, and it's a mandatory subject of bargaining," said PSC Director of Legal Affairs Peter Zwiebach. "But CUNY tried to create this new, non-contractual process without negotiating it with the union."

In contrast, Article 18 of the union contract clearly lays out the procedures for evaluation of progress towards tenure. "It sets forth the areas that you're supposed to be evaluated on, the purposes of the evaluation, who can evaluate you, and what procedures must be followed," Zwiebach said. "It's a very specific article and it is very detailed. It's not ambiguous." (See [www.psc-cuny.org/our-contracts/](http://www.psc-cuny.org/our-contracts/)

article-18-professional-evaluation.)

Article 18 provides for department chairs to perform annual evaluations of a junior faculty member's performance, including teaching, scholarship and service to the department or college. If a department chair is unable to perform this task, it is to be carried out by a member of the departmental personnel and budget or executive committee.

The PSC is in discussions with CUNY management over possible settlement of both the PERB complaint and the union grievance. In the meantime, said Zwiebach, faculty members subjected to the new midterm review should protect their rights by contacting a union grievance officer, either on their campus or in the union's central office at 212-354-1252.

## Union contract provides for a fair process.

## Clarion SEPTEMBER 2011

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# Verizon strikers back at work

By PETER HOGNESS

Workers at Verizon returned to their jobs on August 23, ending a two-week walkout. The strike by 45,000 union members at Verizon was the biggest job action in the US since 2007.

The two unions at Verizon, the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), said they ended the strike because management had finally indicated a real willingness to bargain, in what CWA called “a ‘reset’ of the company’s bargaining position.”

## REFUSAL TO BARGAIN

From the start of the strike on August 7, the two unions had said the cause was Verizon’s refusal to negotiate in good faith. “Since the first day of negotiations, through contract expiration and even today, Verizon management has demanded the same \$1 billion in concessions,” CWA Communications Director Candice Johnson said on August 12. The unions filed unfair labor practice charges over the company’s hard-line stance, and affirmed that the strike could end when real talks were possible.

## But job action may resume

But while union leaders welcomed management’s apparent change in course, they were also cautious. “We don’t consider this a victory in any way,” said CWA President Larry Cohen. “We consider it progress toward a good process at Verizon.”

The Verizon strike drew attention not only for its size, but because of the spectacle of a highly profitable corporation demanding deep concessions from its unionized workers. The company posted profits of \$3 billion this year, and \$22 billion over the last four years. Yet Verizon’s inflexible demands at the bargaining table have included:

- eliminating pensions for all new hires and freezing pensions for current employees;
- scrapping all of the contract’s job security provisions;
- sharply increasing workers’ payments for health insurance premiums;
- cutting back sick days and eliminating four vacation days, including Martin Luther King Day;
- allowing unlimited freedom to outsource union workers’ jobs.

“Workers felt very strongly that their whole standard of living was under attack, that everything we’ve worked toward for decades was under threat,” said IBEW spokesperson Jim Spellane.

“If Verizon is successful, other companies will be encouraged to follow suit,” warned Kenny Williams, president of CWA Local 9510 in California. The unions blasted Verizon for “Wisconsin-style tactics,” including a threat to cancel strikers’ health coverage by the end of last August – an aggressive move the company had never deployed so early in past union walkouts.

## VERIZON’S MYTHS

Verizon has a total of 197,000 employees, of whom 45,000 are union members. The corporation’s new CEO, Lowell McAdam, is former head of its overwhelmingly non-union wireless division. Union members at Verizon are concentrated in its wireline division, which the company insists is losing money. In a story line most of the media was quick

to repeat, Verizon sought to portray the basic conflict as one between old-fashioned, outdated landline services, which have fewer subscribers every year, and the rapidly expanding wireless division, modern and lean and nimble. In this scenario

## Giveback demands triggered walkout.

the union is supposed to represent the high-cost, unsustainable past, and the company’s concession demands are supposed to be the wave of the rational, unavoidable future.

It’s a simple picture – but one that doesn’t stand up to scrutiny. For one thing, union members note, the unionized workers in the supposedly outdated wireline division are the ones who install and service Verizon’s FiOS services, fiber-optic connections for cable TV, phone and data that Verizon says are technologically advanced. Verizon is heavily promoting FiOS, which it expects to be a major profit center. But during the strike, customers seeking new FiOS installations in August were given installation dates in November and December.

The very distinction between wireless and wireline services doesn’t hold up very far when a

call is being transmitted, Verizon workers say. “The cell towers are supported by fiber optics, and fiber optics are handled by the ‘landline’ division,” said one Verizon worker in Virginia. “This division between Verizon Wireless and [the rest of] Verizon is not so black and white.”

“The cell call travels less than 3% on average using wireless transmission. Then it goes to land,” explained another. “How they move money between the divisions is just accounting tricks. Besides, the wireline side has reported profits for the last five quarters, according to...the *Wall Street Journal*.”

PSC members were among the thousands of unionists who came out in support of the Verizon strikers – on picket lines, leafleting Verizon Wireless stores, and in a crowd of several thousand people demanding that the New York City Department of Education not award a \$120 million contract to Verizon for phone and Internet services.

“I think we’re starting to wake up,” said Jim Perlstein, co-chair of the PSC Solidarity Committee. “It’s clear that if unions can be destroyed in the private sector, the same thing will happen to public employees. They’re trying to do that now! ‘An injury to one is an injury to all’ isn’t just a nice sentiment – it’s how the world works. So if Verizon workers go back on strike, we’ll be there to support them.”

# TAs at NYU fight to regain union contract

By ARI PAUL

Dozens of graduate teaching assistants from around the country rallied outside New York University’s main library on August 11, voicing their support for NYU’s tenacious Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC) and its fight to regain a union contract. NYU has refused to recognize GSOC as a bargaining agent since 2005, but at this protest there was a sense of optimism: the ruling that withdrew legal protection for graduate employee unions at private universities may well be overturned this year.

A decade ago GSOC won the first union contract covering graduate employees at a US private university. But in 2004, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled in a case at Brown University that graduate students working as teaching assistants were not employees and thus couldn’t unionize. The Republican-dominated Board held that graduate assistants were not engaged in paid labor. According to the NLRB, graduate employees’ work in the classroom, grading papers, or preparing exams was simply a part of their training as academics – a sort of seminar in college teaching.

## RENEWED HOPE

The fact that graduate employees are regularly assigned to teach classes related only marginally – or not at all – to their doctoral studies was largely ignored by the Board, along with many other features of graduate assistants’ working lives.

## NLRB may spur recognition

But the makeup of the NLRB has changed under the Obama administration and, this June, Region 2 of the NLRB issued a decision that could lay the foundation for the national board to reverse the Brown decision.

The regional board acted under the precedent set by the Brown decision, and its June decision didn’t reverse it. But its decision tore apart the semi-feudal logic behind the prevailing legal doctrine, paying close attention to exactly the factors that the NLRB had previously dismissed.

## REVERSING BROWN

“[B]y separating the services performed from receipt of financial aid, the...record clearly shows that these graduate assistants are performing services under the control and direction of this employer, for which they are compensated,” the regional NLRB decision said.

“Whether through teaching or research,” it continued, “the graduate students are performing services for pay...That the employer pays for these services pursuant to its financial aid budget, instructional budget, operational budget, or through federal grants, is irrelevant to an analysis of employee status or community of interest.”

The year after the Brown decision, NYU withdrew its recognition of GSOC and refused to negotiate a new agreement. If the Brown decision is overturned and a new rep-

resentation election is held at NYU, GSOC is confident that it will win a solid majority. Activists told *Clarion* that the school’s graduate students have complained about the lack of dental insurance and the fact that their health care plan was changed with no discussion or advance notice.

“We want to have a say in it,” said David Wachsmuth, who is pursuing a PhD in sociology. And a restructuring of employment at the university has meant that graduate students can’t always secure classes

to teach, GSOC members said.

The graduate students rallying on August 11 were in New York City because GSOC hosted a national meeting of the Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions (CGEU), a network of unions representing graduate employees across North America and Puerto Rico. The network includes the Teaching Assistants’ Association (TAA) at the University of Wisconsin, which was at the center of this year’s Wisconsin labor uprising. (See page 8.)

There’s a strong basis for “a New York-wide movement of academic labor,” said PSC organizer Sarah Hughes, because academic work-

ers so often change employers, yet still run up against the same conditions. Hughes, who attended the conference, first worked with CGEU as vice president of the Graduate Employee Organization at UMass Amherst (see page 5).

“A lot of NYU students become adjuncts at CUNY,” she told *Clarion* – and when faculty at Long Island University went on strike this fall (see page 4), they appealed to faculty at other schools not to scab

on the strike by taking on courses at LIU. “We are all academic workers in higher ed, facing the same struggles,” said Hughes. “Students, adjuncts, junior faculty – we’re all being hurt by the same conservative agenda.”

**‘We want to have a say.’**



Members of the Teaching Assistants’ Association at the University of Wisconsin joined an Aug. 11 rally at NYU.

## CORPORATE MANAGEMENT AT CUNY

# The growth of centralized control

By SANDI COOPER

Chair, University Faculty Senate

Writing about British and US universities in *The New York Review of Books*, the scholar Simon Head traced the assault on scholarship and research to “theories and practices... mostly American in origin, conceived in American business schools and management consulting firms.” Aided by technologies developed by corporations such as IBM, Oracle and SAF that provided enforcement mechanisms, academia has been flooded by terms unheard of a generation ago – “performance indicators,” “units of assessment,” “productivity measures” and “metrics.” From Texas to Manchester, scholars of medieval poetry are found superfluous because the cost of their salaries is not offset by measures of “value added.” A young scholar is urged to write articles, not books, so his count can be increased annually.

The practices of corporate management are aided by a phenomenon of the past generation – so-called advanced degrees in higher education management where people are presumably trained to lead colleges by organizational guidebooks and “best practices” – all defined by other professional administrators. As one who has taught since 1959, I cannot see how these directions bode much good for a future.

Such trends reflect a fundamental departure from the basic principles on which universities have functioned since their creation: scholarship and teaching directed by scholars exercising joint control in an independent institution. In place of an individual savant, artist or philosopher dependent on the largesse and whims of an individual patron, the creation of the university meant the establishment of an independent institution based on shared standards and principles. While not perfect, it is a structure that has combined democratic decision-making with respect for the authority derived from deep knowledge of one’s subject.

## THE EARLY YEARS

Increasing control by a centralized group of administrators has not been good for higher education. CUNY’s version of this hair-raising trend has its own distinctive features. When the City University of New York was established in its modern form in 1963, as an entity including a new graduate school, a variety of senior colleges and several community colleges, the chancellor had a small portfolio and the members of the Board of Higher Education were eminent New Yorkers, selected after a blue ribbon panel recommended them to the mayor. Each was connected to a college in the borough from which he or she came, and was expected to advocate for its interests. Trustees set broad policies, appointed presidents, eventually recognized the union and set up a faculty senate – and went about their business.

They did not try to mind everyone else’s business. The University was a loose federation, with the presidents on the campuses largely left to their own devices to succeed or flop. Was this perfect? No. But by and large, faculty senates were able to develop institutional cultures that sustained educational values and provided continuity.

Periodically the Board of Higher Education imposed a university-wide policy – i.e.,

open admissions in 1969-1970. The frightening bankruptcy of New York City in 1975-1976 produced semi-hysterical responses from the Board – huge layoffs breaking tenure, merging colleges that had little in common, closing down liberal arts programs until the State took over. The Board of Higher Ed was then replaced by a Board of Trustees, with ten appointed by the governor, five by the mayor, and chairs of the student senate and the University Faculty Senate serving ex officio (the latter without vote).

## BY THE NUMBERS

Until the mid-1990s, the new Board of Trustees made some changes to open admissions, began to move towards creating standard policies for the University (such as central purchasing and sharing library resources). However, with the election of George Pataki as governor and Rudolf Giuliani as mayor, the entire atmosphere changed.

A conservative statewide group, Change New York, and the New York City-based Manhattan Institute launched a barrage against CUNY, the opening salvos of a scorched-earth public relations campaign that largely succeeded.

A stream of articles denouncing open admissions were supported by James Traub’s *City on a Hill*; local TV programs featured right-wing critics and finally, Mayor Giuliani appointed a commission headed by Benno Schmidt that was supposed to “save” CUNY. The commission’s 1999 report laid the foundation for the “CUNiversity” of the present. Eventually Benno Schmidt became chair of the Board – replacing Herman Badillo, who had spent a good deal of time bad-mouthing CUNY and the University Faculty Senate, blaming open enrollment for supposed “social promotion,” and even meddling in syllabi of courses he deemed too left-wing.

With the appointment of Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, the corporatist mode found its CEO. The chancellor could now appoint and remove presidents – previously a Board prerogative. The chancellor could call presidents to order, manage the searches, conduct the evaluations and shape the internal policies of a college if he thought it was needed. One president who rejected a candidate for tenure was overruled – and soon removed. Presidents became managers, not leaders or visionaries. Faculty snickered that they had become glorified deans, and many of these “deans” treated their college staffs with disrespect that bordered on contempt. The central office launched an annual evaluation called the Performance Management Process (PMP), a tool by which central administration could more closely manage the affairs of the colleges. CUNY was to seek private funding and monies for special areas – i.e., the honors college – were raised. A massive PR campaign on buses, billboards, newspaper ads and subway placards announced CUNY’s second coming.

To find out what is valued under this new regime, University-wide and at your own college, all faculty should check the PMP website ([tinyurl.com/CUNY-PMP](http://tinyurl.com/CUNY-PMP)). The chancellor believes that quantitative metrics are all that count; presidents who earn a good report card, the motivational carrot, get raises and other rewards. Good boys get goodies.

This system has no check-off that celebrates students moved by a beautiful painting or an elegant equation. Faculty who think students need to learn about the evo-

transfer, is actually the opposite – unless we agree that a superficial gloss of general education, molded by “outcomes,” is good enough for our undergraduates.

All colleges will now have to subscribe to a set of goals laid out by a committee appointed solely by the vice chancellor for academic affairs. This committee is composed of a selected cohort of faculty selected by the Office of Academic Affairs in consultation with campus administrators. It does not include a single elected faculty representative. The selection, over the summer in a great hurry, studiously ignored the 20-plus members of the General Education committee of the University Faculty Senate.

The process requires that the committee report by November 1; faculty will have until November 15 to respond. Both in its adoption and its implementation, the Pathways project has ignored the bylaw role of the University Faculty Senate (UFS). Contrary to propaganda claims that the UFS has been genuinely consulted, it was not. This system ignores the role of college curricula committees, faculty senates and bylaw requirements that those who teach the courses decide on what they should be.

## UNDERMINING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The system comes very close to undermining academic freedom. A centrally appointed faculty committee will determine whether your course (a) belongs in general education “outcomes” categories and (b) for nine majors, another set of committees will propose three requirements for that major. If your campus, for instance, believes that four semesters of a foreign language are essential for an educated person, you will have to ditch something else. In an era of globalization where knowing multiple languages is more necessary than ever, in an age when scientific literacy is urgently needed yet seems to be in short supply, the University is cutting back on general education requirements to meet a lower common denominator and increase graduation rates. (It is interesting that students at Brooklyn and Baruch opposed this reduction in a resolution and that Lehman students voted in their college council against it, but their voices went unheard.)

Well over 40 faculty groups weighed in against the proposal in the Spring 2011 semester, but their objections were dismissed as trivial or self-serving. CUNiversity’s leadership, in its usual style, went cherry-picking to find people to serve on its committees. Their role will be cited as “faculty participation” and consent. They will restructure academic outcomes and shovel these into a 30-credit common core that allows a senior college to add 12 more credits to its requirements. You will lose control of your graduation requirements and essentially your admission requirements as well.

This is the most violent assault on shared governance that I have seen in four-plus decades of teaching at CUNY. It is a radical rejection of university traditions that arose in Salerno, Bologna and Paris over nine centuries ago. Despite state or church oversight, faculty generally elected their deans for limited terms, gave the lectures and voted on the degrees. We are left with a shadow of that millennium of practice, and an impoverished education is the result.



lution of global relationships over five to six centuries won’t be prevented from pursuing that goal – but it won’t do much for their president’s PMP. Nor will an insistence on the importance of foreign languages. Most courses may have to justify themselves by size of enrollment.

People for whom truth mainly emerges from a combination of numbers and motivational psychology see nothing wrong in micromanagement and centralization. About a decade ago, a trustee stated to a meeting of the UFS Executive Committee that he viewed shared governance as faculty and administration carrying out Board policies. And Board policies these days are largely voted after the chancellor provides the language. We are approaching an imperial chancellor.

## MISLEADING ‘PATHWAYS’

In 2011, this managerial system jumped into the main remaining area of faculty independence and authority – the curriculum. From controlling campus management, introducing a central computer system (yet to prove the millions invested in it), and centralizing purchases the chancellor has leapt into taking over campus faculty authority on curriculum. The “Pathways” project, defended as in the interests of student

## An assault on faculty authority



## 15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

### Health care: spread the word

Seventeen hundred adjuncts are at risk of losing their health insurance next summer. We cannot let CUNY walk away from its responsibility as an employer. That's unacceptable and PSC members say so loud and clear at the September 26 meeting of the Board of Trustees. Help us spread the word so we can make this cam-

paign as broad and as deep as it needs to be in order to win. Before the meeting, talk to one colleague about adjunct health insurance and why it's important to be at the September 26 demonstration, at Baruch College at 4:00. It's time to reach out and support each other – our collective strength will surprise us.

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# Spirit of Wisconsin spreads

By JOHN TARLETON

## Battles in three states

When Wisconsin unions fought back against Gov. Scott Walker's attack on workers' rights last winter, they focused on legislative votes and giant rallies in the state capital, Madison. This spring and summer the struggle spread across the state as the labor movement and its supporters battled for control of the State Senate.

Legions of volunteers carried out a petition drive that forced recall votes for six Republican state senators who supported Walker in slashing public worker union rights. Conservative groups retaliated by bringing recall votes against three incumbent Democratic senators. All told, nine legislative recall elections were held during July and August; there had previously been only four state-level recall votes in all of Wisconsin's history.

### GAINING GROUND

Unions and progressives gained some ground but fell short of their strategic goal to change control of the State Senate. Angry voters booted Republican incumbents in two out of six districts, while all three Democrats were retained in office.

"Running in districts that were drawn to elect Republicans, that have consistently elected Republicans for generations, and that all backed Walker last November, the Democrats scored a pair of historic victories," wrote John Nichols, political columnist for Madison's *Capital Times*. Democrats came within a couple of percentage points of winning a third new seat in a district that has been Republican since the administration of Grover Cleveland. But in the end they fell short, and Republicans retained a one-vote State Senate majority.

With Republicans' margin in the State Senate narrowing from 19-14 to 17-16, the balance of power on many issues is now in the hands of the Senate's lone moderate Republican, Dale Schultz, who was the only GOP senator to vote against Walker's anti-union bill.

The recall races were unprecedented in several ways. Never before had one state seen so many sitting elected officials recalled at one time. In the history of the United States, only 13 state legislators have been ousted by recall. All told, an estimated \$35 to \$40 million was spent on nine state legislative races in small suburban and rural districts. Millions of dollars poured into the state from anti-union groups funded by wealthy right-wingers like the billionaire Koch brothers, inundating the airwaves with negative attack ads. While unions also spent heavily in the recall races, many observers called it "the first post-Citizens United" election, referring to the 2010 Supreme Court ruling allowing unlimited corporate funding of "independent" political ads.

Democrats gained ground in all six Republican districts compared to results in the 2010 midterm election, and they are likely to pursue a statewide recall initiative against Walker next year after he completes his first year in office. Walker, whose poll numbers hit record lows

during the protracted fight, has tried to sound more conciliatory in the wake of the recall votes.

Wisconsin was not the only state where new Republican governors began the year by pursuing a hard-right, anti-union agenda. In Ohio, Gov. John Kasich and the Republican-controlled State Legislature passed Senate Bill 5, which severely curtails the collective bargaining rights of public employees.

### MASSIVE

We Are Ohio, a coalition of labor unions and their allies, responded by gathering 1.3 million petition signatures in an effort to force a statewide referendum this fall to repeal the measure – a massive show of strength, considering that only about 241,000 signatures were legally required. Thousands of opponents of SB 5 paraded through the state capitol of Columbus on June 29, to deliver the signatures to the Secretary of State's office. "The petitions filled 1,502 boxes that were hauled to the Secretary

of State's office in a 48-foot-long tractor trailer plastered with the message 'Veto SB 5,'" reported Cleveland's *Plain Dealer*.

Over the summer the repeal effort was ahead in the polls by double-digit margins. In August, Kasich and his Republican allies suddenly offered to negotiate a compromise to SB 5, if union leaders agreed to scuttle the referendum. "Repeal the bill, then we'll talk," was the response from unions and their allies. The referendum will go forward as scheduled, with a vote on November 8.

**Unions continue to mobilize.**

Labor organizing has also received a boost on Florida university campuses, as unions responded to a proposal from Tea Party-backed Governor Rick Scott to decertify public-sector unions that have less than 50% of the members enrolled in their bargaining unit. This is a difficult task in a "right-to-work" state like Florida where members of a bargaining unit are required by law to receive the same benefits and protections of a union contract whether they pay dues or not. While Scott's plan has stalled in the State Legislature, unions have been responding on the ground.

United Faculty of Florida (UFF), which has chapters at 25 universities and colleges in the state, took up the challenge in the spring. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) sent dozens of organizers from around the country to help out.

### ORGANIZING 101

PSC Organizer John Gergely joined the effort. He spent seven weeks working with union activists at the University of Central Florida (UCF) in Orlando and helped them develop more effective techniques for one-to-one outreach to colleagues. During Gergely's time at UCF, the chapter added 110 new members and increased its overall sign-up percentage from 20 to 31%. Chapter President Kathy Seidel told *Clarion* that this marked the start of an ongoing campaign by UCF to further expand its ranks this semester.

"We're able to stand on our own now and organize," she said.

Back in Madison, leaders of the Teaching Assistants' Association (TAA) at the University of Wisconsin face a similar challenge. The TAA, which played a central role in the prolonged occupation of the State Capitol by union protesters last winter, has lost its right to dues check-off and recently chose not to seek recertification of their 3,000-member local, due to the onerous conditions imposed by Gov. Walker's law.

TAA activists are currently looking to organize dues-paying members so that the organization can remain viable and find ways to defend and maintain the contractual rights won over more than 40 years of struggle.

### ON THE JOB

They are now focused on strengthening their union on the job more than pursuing electoral politics, TAA Co-President Adrienne Pagac told *Clarion*. "Our power is in the workplace. That's where we have leverage vis-a-vis our employer," she said.

"Some of the great moments in US labor history took place before unions had exclusive recognition," Pagac said. "A union is a union not because of a designation, but because workers come together to fight for something they believe in."



Thousands of union members and supporters marched through Columbus, Ohio, on June 29 to deliver 1.3 million petition signatures for a statewide referendum to repeal anti-union legislation passed earlier this year.

Marvin Fong, The Plain Dealer