

January 27, 2005

A STATE OF EMERGENCY IN CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Whereas the collective bargaining agreement between the Professional Staff Congress and the City University of New York expired on October 31, 2002, and CUNY faculty and staff have not had raises since August 1, 2001; and

Whereas during the same period that PSC members were without a raise and experienced a reduction in the real value of their salaries, CUNY's top management accepted raises with a total cost to the University of \$2.1 million a year; and

Whereas the Chancellor's Office has launched an expensive fund-raising campaign whose motto is "Investing in Futures" while failing to invest in the people who create the real future of the University—the faculty and staff; and

Whereas the financial offer on the table from University management, currently 1.5% over four years with a small one-time bonus of \$400 (pro-rated for part-timers) both insults people who routinely work their hearts out for CUNY and forecasts a deeply inadequate final offer; and

Whereas in order to offer quality education, build a strong University and sustain our own lives in the profession, the PSC needs more than a minimal contract: that is, we need a contract that offers increased Welfare Fund contributions and money for equity advances as well as salary increases above the level of inflation; and

Whereas PSC members have endured painful reductions in Welfare Fund benefits over the past two years, including a shift of approximately one-third of the cost of prescription drugs and a significant portion of dental care costs from the employer to the employee; yet escalating healthcare costs mean that without a substantial increase in employer contributions the Welfare Fund reserve will be depleted in less than a year; and

Whereas the PSC has made a fair, reasonable financial proposal: the settlement achieved by the SUNY faculty and staff (approximately 15% in salary and other improvements over four years) plus the added money required to stabilize and enhance our Welfare Fund; and

Whereas the University management offer of 1.5% (with a \$400 lump sum and a further 1% available if we pay for it by increased "productivity") covers none of these needs; and

Whereas a refusal to invest in CUNY's faculty and staff would be ultimately a refusal to invest in CUNY's students, because our working conditions are their learning conditions; and

Whereas the failure to resolve the PSC contract has a direct impact on students, who have also been repeatedly battered by tuition increases and the systematic withdrawal of public funding from CUNY; the PSC's agenda of creating competitive salaries, benefits and working conditions at CUNY is directed toward strengthening the University and enhancing the education, research and service in which it engages; and

Whereas the PSC has tried every other tactic to press for the settlement we need: we have engaged in serious collective bargaining; we have worked to narrow our areas of difference with management; we have collected thousands of signatures on petitions to the Chancellor and college presidents; we have appealed directly to the Board of Trustees—presenting them with letters at every meeting since May 2004, organizing a member presence at every meeting since May and requesting meetings between each individual Trustee and the PSC president; we have sent hundreds of faxes to the Chancellor about our contract needs; we have met with college presidents, picketed on campus, received the support of students, met with the City and State, met with the CUNY Chancellor and shown the support of the entire membership for the position that a minimal contract is not acceptable; and

Whereas despite the Chancellor's public statement in May 2004 that he did not intend to offer the PSC an austerity contract, the management of the University has failed to respond to these powerful and unprecedented expressions of our need—and the University's need; and

Whereas a contract at the level suggested by management's 1.5% offer has already begun to result in an inability to recruit and retain high-quality faculty and staff, with several departments reporting their difficulty in attracting the candidates they seek when candidates learn of the teaching load, salaries and working conditions at CUNY; and

Whereas CUNY management's failure to offer an adequate economic framework for the settlement is coupled with demands that represent a direct attack on faculty autonomy, availability of research time, job security and the ability of the union to represent its members and enforce the contract; and

Whereas the 20,000 faculty and staff represented by the PSC have given their professional lives to CUNY, enduring substandard salaries and working conditions, making do with inadequate research time and resources, existing in a permanent culture of scarcity—out of commitment to a vision of what a public urban university could be, out of dedication to our students and out of understanding of the value of intellectual work; therefore be it

Resolved, that the PSC declare a *state of emergency in the contract negotiations* and that we call on every member of the faculty and staff to become a part of the mass effort that will be required, given the current political climate, to win the contract we need; that we rededicate the union to old-fashioned, one-on-one organizing so that every member is informed and engaged, so that every member becomes part of the campus and worksite campaigns that will direct our political force toward a good contract; and be it further

Resolved, that the chapters of the PSC prepare the membership for decisions at the Delegate Assemblies this spring on the increasingly militant actions that may be required to win a contract that meets our needs—by engaging in broad-based discussion of the full range of actions in which unions historically have engaged and their relevance to our current campaign: leafleting, letter-writing, protests, demonstrations, lobbying, media campaigns, coalition-building with students and other groups, direct action, special assessment of members for union defense funds, and job actions up to and including strikes.

Adopted unanimously, January 27, 2005