



SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS



**RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR
PRESIDENT BARBARA BOWEN’S 21 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE
IN SERVICE AND PROVIDING EXTRAORDINARY LEADERSHIP
TO THE PSC, TO CUNY, TO THE CITY, AND THE UNION MOVEMENT**

Proposed by Principal Officers Who Served With President Bowen:
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Whereas,

Dr Barbara Bowen was elected president of PSC in May 2000 after years of teaching and racial justice and union activism. Prior to coming to CUNY, she organized tobacco workers for the United Farm Workers, taught at Wellesley and received her Ph.D. from Yale. In 1986, Dr. Bowen joined the faculty of Queens College. From the beginning of her tenure at CUNY, she committed to both activist and organizing work; becoming the Coordinator of the Mellon Minority Undergraduate Fellowship and joining CUNY Concerned Faculty, an organization fighting for racial and economic justice for faculty, staff, and students. By the late 1990s, she helped to lead the CUNY-wide union insurgent movement and was elected as PSC Queens College Chapter Chair in 1996 on the New Caucus Slate. In these roles, she led and fought for racial and economic justice, and fought against tuition increases, austerity measures, retrenchment, and denial of due process rights.

Whereas,

President Barbara Bowen led the PSC New Caucus insurgent slate to victory in 2000. Her vision articulated repeatedly in the election was that another and better CUNY is possible. In the ensuing 21 years, through the horror of 9/11, the Great Recession of 2008, and the Covid-19 Pandemic, she successfully pressed an ambitious PSC agenda through annual budget battles and five rounds of contract negotiations with CUNY, the City, and the State. Under her leadership, the vision of “another university” was concretized and encoded in contracts, budget advances and new alliances. Exemplifying the best of academic unionism, PSC contracts consistently joined members’ working conditions with CUNY students’ learning conditions. President Bowen was relentless in focusing the PSC on tackling the conditions that plagued the CUNY workforce: low and unequal salaries, contingency, overwork, and lack of professional development opportunities.

Her command of the many details associated with contract provisions and concern for the working lives of members led to the reversal of many of the concessions made during the 1990s. In addition, contract advances during her tenure as president improved the working conditions of every part of the PSC bargaining unit and valued their professional work. They include but are not limited to significant equity salary increases for both full- and part-time faculty and staff, professional development funding, 80% sabbatical pay, enhanced PSC-CUNY Research Foundation funding, reformed HEO reclassification procedures, equity salary increases for CLTs, untenured faculty research leaves, and department chair summer pay and research stipends. Countering trends of increasing and intensifying workload, President Bowen negotiated reduced faculty teaching loads CUNY-wide. In addition, the PSC established a contractual limit of 35-hour per week workload for non-classroom instructional staff. Family-friendly and healthcare provisions were added to the PSC Contract with pathbreaking provisions such as paid-parental leave, adjunct health insurance, graduate employee health insurance, paid family leave, and PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund benefit enhancements.

Whereas,

leadership matters. President Bowen is the first to acknowledge that these accomplishments were not brought about by any single person or leader. No leader can invent effective campaigns for reform without a committed, hungry, and smart base of members and a competent, expertly led union staff.

Simultaneously, an active membership without a strong, imaginative, and strategic leadership is unlikely to produce enduring structural change. Progressive change driven by the PSC was forged out of an alchemy combining two tendencies of leverage secured outside on the streets and inside negotiating with CUNY, NYS and NYC. President Bowen has been the enduring fulcrum of a shared political project to build the power of the PSC by gaining a rightful share of public resources for CUNY. Again, and again, her leadership has been essential in both defying the strictures of austerity policies and winning reforms many thought impossible. As chief negotiator of the PSC, President Bowen led the bargaining and legislative teams to foundational victories. She guided the team through dense thickets of opposition from CUNY management, the State, and the City. The strength of her leadership was most evident when the power arrayed against the PSC was most daunting.

President Bowen's blend of leadership qualities is unique. First, she has led with grace, always engaged in dialogue to find best ways forward. Second, her tactical imagination, sharp analytic skills, and command of detail were the bedrock on which the scaffolding for bargaining sessions, resolution formulation, and legislative and programmatic proposals were solidly built. Third, President Bowen has had a deep commitment to listening to membership and to both filling in the gaps and relating membership concerns to elements of the PSC's agenda. Fourth, she has been strategically astute in aligning our political agenda with bargaining demands. Fifth, she has been able to see beyond a present agenda to a way forward in next stages of work. Sixth, she has always understood the relationship between critical foundational wins that benefit members, and fighting on an array of fronts for a larger social gain. And, finally, President Bowen has unflinching courage to speak truth to power no matter the setting.

Her courage was never more evident than at the bargaining table. As our chief negotiator, President Bowen played masterful chess with her adversaries, always one step ahead and having a fuller vision of the board. She was a constant source of strength and agility, holding the bargaining team together and contributed mightily to contractual advances. She remained patient, doggedly determined, sustaining, and sharing a never wavering confidence that we would prevail in winning more contractual benefits. Her leadership has been a strong, sweet wind at the back of the bargaining team which contributed to the development of greater team confidence and capacity, and helped produce one collective bargaining victory after another.

In sum, President Bowen's unique leadership qualities combine intense honesty, a will to win, a deep commitment to represent member needs in vision and action, and an understanding of the pragmatic politics of reform within a context of multiple kinds of power arrayed against both the most modest and largest aspirations of the PSC.

Whereas,

President Bowen has been a pillar of support and guiding influence for CUNY for 21 years. Chancellors, college presidents, and other CUNY administrators have come and gone over the past two decades, each with largely unrealized dreams of new programs and visions. Most have had little impact or political independence. Most did not speak for the students, faculty, or community, but for their political masters. Through it all, President Bowen and the PSC have remained an independent voice, trusted by progressive legislators and journalists to provide an unvarnished assessment of CUNY's circumstance and needs. President Bowen was an effective advocate for CUNY and a trusted source of information. Legislators often turned to President Bowen to make the case for a free CUNY, for full-time lines, the end of the exploitive adjunct system of labor, CUNY as an anti-racism project, and for a fully funded CUNY. And, in her final budget testimony before the New York State Legislature, President Bowen unveiled a new piece of legislation, "The New Deal for CUNY," a clear and concrete vision for a path forward to a transformed CUNY. The framing of this legislation is predicated on the historic racist underfunding of CUNY and the need for new levels of investment to ensure access and quality of education for all students.

As noted, aggressive advocacy for needed public investment through legislative lobbying, member organizing, budget-hearings, and bargaining has been a hallmark of President Bowen's public role. President Bowen and the PSC have provided the glue that held CUNY together during two turbulent decades. In an era of CUNY leadership intransigence, administrative turnover, austerity, and indifference to student and members' needs, President Bowen and the PSC have provided stability, built progressively more benefits for members through bargaining, enforcing the contract, fighting for new streams of public money or revenue, and consistently advancing a vision of CUNY as a site aspiring to an equitable, quality, and accessible public higher education for the "whole people."

Whereas,

President Bowen has been a visionary labor leader in New York State and nationally. She led the PSC's efforts to set higher education policies and best practices at the state and national levels in our affiliated bodies: NYSUT, AFT, and AAUP. She helped bring together the AFT and AAUP in joint higher education organizing drives. She led national anti-war efforts within the AFT and devised model legislation for public higher education funding. At NYSUT and AFT meetings, she was a consistent and articulate voice for progressive policies, union democracy, responsible union stewardship, and organizing workers. Among her most impressive contributions was pressing the AFT to develop national standards for part time faculty for job security, wages, and benefits. She could speak with authority on this subject because President Bowen helped the PSC to lead the way for every public university by making significant improvements in the working conditions of part time faculty, leaps in pay, health care coverage, job security and access to professional development and academic travel grants. While not reaching her aspirational goals, President Bowen and the PSC led a national effort for progressive change in a long march forward with and for part time faculty.

Often, President Bowen was the lone voice opposing short-sighted policies in national labor forums. Repeatedly, she displayed both great political courage and principled labor leadership in arguing for the most vulnerable and oppressed workers locally, nationally, and internationally. President Bowen's leadership commitment to an activist political agenda and an inside/outside strategic approach to win gains in an era of oppressive policies of austerity made the PSC a model for other unions in New York City and nationally.

Whereas,

a mark of visionary, effective leadership is to leave a firm foundation for her successors. The contractual provisions negotiated in her 21 years as President and Chief Negotiator provide a strong institutional framework for the union as well as a firm foundation upon which next generations of leadership can build greater power. There is no question that the challenges ahead are great, but the PSC is especially well positioned to meet those challenges. Instructional staff salaries are still not fully competitive, and the adjunct system has not been dismantled. At the same time, after a series of equity gains and other salary increases that stopped, and in some cases reversed, an historic erosion of salaries, the PSC is positioned to make even greater advances.

President Bowen's strong voice eloquently articulated a vision of full funding of public higher education which culminated in the "New Deal for CUNY". This vision maps out the material resources needed to fully fund CUNY and is now encoded in legislation; making clear to coalition partners what we are fighting for. President Bowen's strategic commitment to organizing power inside and outside of the PSC to leverage change was critical to decades of struggle and building a base of activist members. Under President Bowen's leadership, PSC invested in the CUNY Rising Alliance, grew in an organizing staff from the first day of her presidency, remade an award winning union newspaper, Clarion, to communicate union news to every part of the bargaining unit, upgraded the infrastructure of the PSC through ever more refined technology, a union hall to more fully engage members, established a contract enforcement department, and made certain no detail of membership need, especially during economic and health crises, is overlooked.

Therefore,
be it resolved,

the PSC Delegate Assembly expresses deep gratitude for President Barbara Bowen's: imaginative, strategic and extraordinary leadership, years of devoted service to the PSC membership, advocacy for CUNY's students and the ideal of a "free CUNY," solidarity with workers across the City, State, Nation, and World, strengthening the PSC, tireless defense of our health and livelihoods, promotion of progressive causes, bargaining pattern-breaking contracts, staunch anti-racism activism, and courageous voice for the radical vision that another CUNY is possible.