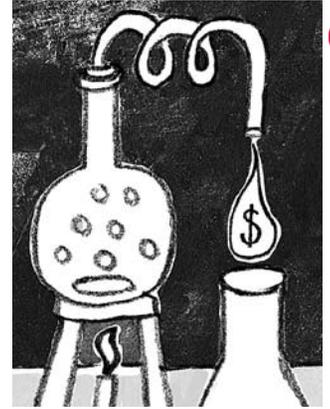


Clarion

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



DECEMBER 2010



CONTRACT Special section

Read the details of the PSC's 35 contract demands.

PAGES A1-A4



APPROVED BY UNION DELEGATES

CONTRACT DEMANDS

On November 4 Albert Sherman, chair of the College Lab Technicians chapter, joined other union delegates in voting to approve a package of contract demands by a wide margin. The PSC's bargaining agenda for a new contract was a product of

months of discussion throughout the union. To turn these demands into a reality, more than 700 PSC members have joined the Committee of 500, a group of rank-and-file activists that will meet via conference call on November 30. **PAGES 2 & 3**

FUNDING

Campuses feel budget cuts' bite

As CUNY schools feel the sting from budget cuts, PSC chapters are pushing for information & accountability and challenging bad decisions.

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ADJUNCT PAY

CUNY shorts pay if waiver asked

CUNY has failed to pay adjuncts for hours taught over the contractual limit while a waiver is requested. The union is demanding they be paid now for every hour worked.

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WORKLOAD

Bake sale makes a point

"Treat us the same" say full-time faculty at City Tech, who are calling on CUNY to bring their teaching load in line with that of other senior colleges.

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ELECTIONS

Rethinking union strategy

Labor can't flourish without strong social movements that are willing to challenge authority, says CUNY's Frances Fox Piven.

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Contract campaign conference call

By JOHN TARLETON

The PSC's Committee of 500 may soon need to change its name: it's grown to more than 700 members since the start of the new academic year. And on Tuesday, November 30, a conference call will connect these activists with members of the PSC bargaining team, and each other, as they discuss how to create a powerful campaign for a new union contract.

BUILDING POWER

The Committee of 500 was launched last spring to help the union build the power it needs to win a fair contract during tough economic and political times. PSC members who join the Committee of 500 commit to do six things: talk to a couple of CUNY colleagues about their priorities for a new

Activists connect on Nov. 30

contract; communicate with colleagues about negotiations; attend at least one bargaining session as an observer; attend one meeting of the Committee of 500 each semester; encourage CUNY friends and colleagues to participate in public actions; and recruit at least one other PSC member to join the Committee. (If you'd like to join, you can sign up online at www.psc-cuny.org/Committee500/signup.htm.)

During the November 30 conference call, which will run from 7:30 to 8:30 pm, PSC negotiators, including President Barbara Bowen, will discuss the union's bargaining agenda and the kind of campaign that it requires.

Committee of 500 to share questions & ideas.

They'll also discuss what's ahead for the Committee of 500, and the next organizing task that committee members will be asked to carry out. Most of the time on the conference call will be dedicated to questions from Committee of 500 members.

"We're trying something new with this call – a virtual meeting. If it works we may do it more often. You'll be able to call in your questions and then hear them answered, and add your ideas to an important discussion of strategy," Bowen said.

Ken Estey, an assistant professor of political science at Brooklyn College, said he was looking

forward to the conference call and taking an active role in the contract campaign.

"I believe deeply in member-to-member organizing," Estey told *Clarion*. "The Committee of 500 creates the conditions for a union that is fully participatory."

SIMPLE TASKS

The fact that Committee of 500 members are asked to do simple, straightforward tasks that don't require a lot of time is also appealing to Estey, who is the director of BC's Studies in Religion Program. "It gives me a chance to do something tangible to help my union that is significant, but not overwhelming," he said.

Committee of 500 member Daniel Shaw teaches three courses per semester as an adjunct at York and John Jay and leads anti-bullying

and gang awareness workshops in 50 public schools a year, while also raising two young children.

Shaw said he loves teaching college-level courses on race and cultural diversity that help students learn to think critically about these issues. But he adds that earning \$8,000 per semester for teaching 140 students is unsustainable. "How am I supposed to survive on \$20,000 per year and pay the rent?"

Shaw told *Clarion* he joined the Committee of 500 because "we're looking for more adjuncts to step up so we can put more leverage on CUNY." Mutual support among union members is the key, Shaw said. "Unity and organizing is the only way change has ever been made."

To join the Committee of 500 and participate in the November 30 conference call, send an e-mail to committee500@psccmail.org.

'Bake sale' for equity at City Tech

By JOHN TARLETON

Full-time faculty at City Tech are required to teach 24 credit hours per year, while the requirement at other senior colleges is 21. For years CUNY management has said it can't afford to eliminate this inequity. So on November 4 PSC activists on campus decided to lend a hand – by holding a bake sale.

The table in the middle of the Namm Building drew a steady crowd at mid-day, with handwritten "No More 24" posters and tasty pastries – homemade chocolate cake, brownies, cranberry muffins and more. The treats were available for a symbolic donation of 21 cents. The goal was to call attention to the issue, and underscore that CUNY could address it at modest cost.

'AN AFFRONT'

Students and teaching colleagues dropped their money in a glass jar, slapped red-and-white "No More 24" stickers onto their clothes and signed up on clipboards to receive more e-mails on the issue.

"It's an affront. The workload has to be fair for the faculty," said Jason Bristol, a construction management major. "They are the ones educating us. You don't want them to be burned out."

Students said the different treatment of City Tech's faculty was unfair to them, too, especially since their tuition is the same as at CUNY's other senior colleges. "We're paying for our classes," said Merced Vega, an advertising and design major. "Students should be able to get more attention from their teachers."

Laura Ghezzi, an assistant math professor, agrees. She is teach-

Extra workload not so sweet, faculty say



Associate Professor Costas Panayotakis (center) at the union's November 4 'bake sale,' discussing what higher course loads mean for faculty and students at City Tech.

ing one fewer class this semester, thanks to the reassigned time for junior faculty that the union won in the 2006 contract. In addition to supporting her research, Ghezzi says, the change has made a difference in her teaching. "It helps me get to know the students quicker and better and give them more individual attention," she told *Clarion*. "I don't need to rush from class as soon as it is over. I can more often stick around afterwards to help students who have a question."

Required to teach more than other senior colleges

Originally a community college, City Tech became a senior college in 1980 – but its teaching load did not change until the PSC pressed the issue in negotiations. Teaching load was reduced from 27 to 26 hours in the 2002 contract and reduced again to 24 hours in 2006.

George Guida, an associate professor of English, says the change to 24 hours was a boon to him and his students.

Since the reduction, Guida has published his second book of poetry and completed a book of short stories coming out next year. He was able to serve as advisor to a

creative writing and spoken word club for several semesters. He also helps organize the monthly College Poetry Slam at the Bowery Poets Café in lower Manhattan and is developing a summer creative writing academy, set to open in 2012.

"I have a little extra time, whereas before I had to economize," Guida said.

Guida said an additional three-hour workload reduction would free him to spend more time advising student groups and allow him to sustain the writing that he does during the summer but often has

to put aside in the semester that follows.

"Professors bring their research back to the classroom, so that their students are participating in the development of new knowledge," added Carole Harris, an assistant professor of English who helped organize the bake sale protest. "My class on literature of the civil rights era grew out of an NEH Summer Institute I could find the time to apply for thanks to my reassigned time as a junior faculty member. So a course load reduction opens possibilities for the future, and it benefits students as well."

IT'S TOO DAMNED HIGH

CUNY's teaching load is too high across the board, said Bob Cermele, City Tech's union chapter chair, and for that reason the union is seeking a restructuring of faculty workload at all colleges in upcoming contract negotiations (see center section). Bringing the teaching load for City Tech in line with other senior colleges is also part of the PSC's current contract demands. Cermele says making the change at City Tech, which would affect a little more than 300 faculty, should be resolved without waiting for the next contract to be settled, and that the minimal cost should be absorbed by CUNY. "It is unfair to ask PSC members to pay for new faculty," he said.

"In a nearly \$3 billion CUNY budget, this is chump change," Cermele added. "There's no legitimate rationale for treating our college differently from other senior colleges. After 30 years, it's long past time for CUNY to treat us the same."

Delegates OK union demands

By PETER HOGNESS

On November 4, in a packed meeting attended by more than 200 people, the PSC Delegate Assembly adopted a bargaining agenda for negotiations on a new contract.

In addition to 115 delegates and alternates, about 100 other PSC members attended. Most observers came to voice support for the urgency of advancing toward parity and greater job security for CUNY's thousands of underpaid, adjunct faculty, and there was energetic discussion on how to reach that goal.

Delegates voted on a set of demands recommended by the PSC Executive Council, and approved the package by a wide margin. Following the union's strategic priorities, it includes demands on competitive salaries; restructuring full-time faculty workload; pay parity and job stability for adjuncts; advancement for those in Higher Education Officer titles (HEOs); specific needs of groups such as library and law school faculty; and other improvements such as tuition waivers at CUNY for employees' children. (See pages in center for complete demands.)

The meeting began with an introduction of the union's bargaining team and a summary of the proposed demands, before moving into discussion and debate. On full-time faculty workload, "we propose that it be restructured," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "No one in the faculty is asking to work less. We're just asking to be able to work more at the things that make a difference," she explained. "The one thing our students need most is time with their faculty... Our teaching load should enable us to spend time with students; instead, it prevents it."

TIME

In addition to a CUNY-wide change in the number of credit hours taught by full-time faculty, union proposals on class size, on student mentoring, and on the time devoted to new educational technology all aim to restructure faculty workload to allow more time for students and research.

On advancement for HEOs, Iris DeLutro, chair of the HEO Chapter, said the problem begins with the fact that HEOs, unlike faculty members, cannot currently receive more recognition or advance to a better pay scale unless management concludes that they are doing an entirely different job. No increase in workload, experience, or effectiveness is enough to earn advancement within the same position. The only available path is "reclassification" into an entirely new job title.

After unsuccessfully trying to break this logjam in past negotiations, DeLutro said, the PSC bargaining team has developed "a new, creative way of tackling the problem." By creating an "advanced"

Contract bargaining agenda



Jessica Burke, a union delegate from College of Staten Island, speaks during the November 4 special meeting of the PSC Delegate Assembly.

designation within a given title, and linking this to a process of peer review, she said, HEOs who are not in the top classification would now have a more practical way to receive more money and more respect as their contribution to the University grows over time.

While these and other issues were the subject of detailed discussion, the topic that drew such a large number of observers to the DA was adjunct equity. Wearing orange t-shirts that said, "CUNY Contingents: We Are the Majority," and carrying signs with slogans such as "End the 2-Tier Labor System," the crowd applauded speakers who stressed that movement toward parity for part-timers must be part of the next collective bargaining agreement.

The bargaining agenda drafted by the PSC negotiating team, and recommended by the Executive Council (EC), takes a new approach to winning job security for CUNY's contingent employees. Under this proposal, teaching adjuncts would earn a Certificate of Continuous Employment (CCE) in their adjunct positions, similar to that earned by full-time lecturers, after teaching an average of 12 hours per year in the same department for five of the last seven years and a department review of their work. Adjuncts with a CCE would then be guaranteed a minimum assignment of six hours per semester and could only be fired for just cause.

"This is a more ambitious demand than those we've made in the past on this issue," Bowen told delegates. "If adjuncts are teaching more than

half the courses they are part of the faculty," she said to *Clarion*. "Basic job security for adjuncts who have taught successfully for years and passed a departmental review stabilizes the whole faculty workforce. Our students deserve instructors whom they can count on to be there next semester."

On pay parity, adjuncts currently earn far less than full-time lecturers per classroom hour. The demands put forward by the EC call for "substantial, measurable progress toward...proportional parity with the full-time lecturer title," through increased hourly pay, longevity increments, and/or converting long-serving adjuncts to full-time positions.

Many of the observers had signed a petition focused on demands for adjunct equity, which received 1,400 signatures in the weeks before the DA. Drafted before the EC's proposed demands were announced, it took a different approach on certain points, and Baruch delegate Douglas Medina proposed that the EC's demands be revised to incorporate the petition's demands.

SECURITY

On job security, the petition called for a seniority system for adjuncts, all adjunct appointments to be for a minimum of three years and a statement of reasons required for all non-reappointments. Holly Clarke, an adjunct and a delegate from John Jay, argued that in the EC's proposal, "there is nothing that strengthens job security within the first [several] years. And that's a large omission. We need a bridge to the CCE."

Diane Menna, an adjunct at Queens College for 27 years and a member of the bargaining team, said that the question was less whether more improvements could be added to the list, and more what would be the union's central priorities. "The points listed in this amendment are weaker than the demand for an adjunct CCE," said Menna, "because a CCE is full security, rather than just a three-year contract or job seniority."

STRATEGIC

"I certainly understand the question that Holly is raising," said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, also a bargaining team member. "But it's also true that to advance a job security proposal, we're going to need full-time faculty and department chairs...supporting this proposal on the ground, on the campuses, within their departments," he said. "I think they will support it, in part because they will see analogues between full-time faculty process and the progression to job security for lecturers and our proposal, under which the same thing would be available for part-timers."

"As we think about our demands," Fabricant emphasized, "we also need to think about how we build the power to advance them as part of a strategic agenda."

On pay equity, the petition called for a \$30 increase in all adjuncts' hourly pay, and for annual step increases. "I think that we need to make increased hourly pay not just one possible option...but the choice method to close the pay gap for all contingent faculty," said Carl Lindskoog, an EC member who favored the idea.

"It's the best way to dismantle the structure of the two-tier system," Lindskoog said. Measures such as longevity increments, which focus on longer-serving adjuncts, would leave other adjuncts farther behind in relative terms, he added.

"Diminishing the two-tier system requires that you close the gap be-

tween full-time and part-time faculty," said John Jay's Clarke. "We need to close that gap because it makes it more expensive to hire adjuncts and it strengthens our rationale to hire people [in] full-time positions."

PSC First Vice President Steve London countered that the demand formulated by the bargaining team allows for combining different approaches in the most effective way. The amendment, he said, would take the economic package "and spread that money across a very large group instead of targeting [it]."

London noted that a large segment of current adjuncts also hold full-time jobs or collect a pension, including full-time CUNY faculty who teach overload courses. "So you're going to take a limited resource and give [much] of it to people who have full-time jobs or incomes that are substantial," he said. "That will leave less for those who need the money most. I think that is problematic from the perspective of justice for adjuncts." Giving union negotiators a variety of tools will get a better result, London said.

In the end the amendment failed, on a vote of 25-73. After some further discussion on other issues, from salary steps to tuition waivers, the entire bargaining agenda proposed by the EC was approved by a wide margin, with 86 votes in favor and 11 against.

SCHEDULE

With the union's contract demands now established, the PSC has written to CUNY representatives about scheduling the first bargaining sessions. Initial bargaining sessions usually focus on procedural questions and initial presentations of both sides' demands.

"Thank you to every person who came tonight, who organized and spoke out for their point of view," Bowen said after the meeting's conclusion. "Now let's work on this together. Let's go forward with an agenda where full-timers and part-timers support each other. Let's organize to win."



A large contingent of adjuncts called for ending the two-tier labor system.

PSC helps elect union-friendly candidates

By PETER HOGNESS

Grassroots action by the PSC and other unions helped elect a number of pro-union, pro-CUNY candidates, in a year when Republicans racked up electoral gains with calls for cuts in public spending.

"I believe in movement politics," said Attorney General-elect Eric Schneiderman. "This was a campaign of activists – and boy, did we show what activists can do." Schneiderman's 55-44% victory came with strong backing from the PSC and other unions, tenant organizations and groups dedicated to equal rights for all. "Our victory...proves that if you are willing to speak up for justice, if you are willing to speak the basic truths that define what Democrats are supposed to be about, you can win an election, [even in] what is supposed to be a year when conservatives are sweeping America."

MARGIN OF VICTORY

Comptroller Tom DiNapoli won by 50-47% with a campaign that hit hard at his main opponent's cozy relationship with Wall Street. A pre-Election Day poll had shown the contests for both offices as toss-ups,

Grassroots effort pays off



PSC member Joan Gregg helps get out the vote for Tony Avella.

with all leading candidates tied at 44%. Union-based get-out-the-vote operations were a big reason that candidates hostile to public workers lost both contests. DiNapoli's winning margin in a closer race was provided by votes he received on the Working Families Party line.

Efforts by the PSC and other unions also made the difference in a State Senate upset in Queens, where Tony Avella, a strong advocate for public education, defeated anti-immigrant State Sen. Frank Padavan. Avella's win against a 38-year incumbent was based on

grassroots organization and his broader appeal in a district that is becoming more diverse.

"People were glad to see us," said Joan Gregg, a retired professor from City Tech who knocked on doors for Avella with other members of the PSC and UFT. "One guy, who was very interested in Avella's support for education, said, 'You're teachers? You're my heroes,'" Gregg recalled. "It brought tears to my eyes, because you certainly don't hear that in the media."

Avella lost no time in putting his victory to work. After Mayor Bloomberg named publishing executive Cathie Black as his next schools chancellor, Avella was the first elected official to ask the State Education Commissioner to deny Black the waiver that someone with her lack of experience in education would need in order to hold the post.

"While I'm sure that Ms. Black is a very well qualified executive in the magazine industry, the top executive in the New York City school system should be an educator," Avella wrote in a letter to State Education Commissioner David Steiner. "Ms. Black's own admis-

sions that she has had no experience in union negotiations and sent her own children to private schools further disqualifies her for this position."

Avella's victory also gave the Democrats a shot at retaining control of the State Senate. At press-time it was still unclear which party would prevail, thanks to ongoing recounts in some upstate races. But without Avella's upset, Democrats' prospects would have been nil.

"I want to congratulate PSC activists for the role they played in this election," said PSC First Vice President Steve London. "If the State Senate does result in a 31-31 tie, we will have played an important role in preventing a Republican State Senate, which would have negative consequences for CUNY funding. We worked closely with the UFT, and together we made a real difference in this race."

Like other unions and education advocates, the PSC faces a tough political year in 2011. But the PSC can take some satisfaction in helping candidates like Schneiderman, DiNapoli and Avella swim against the tide in 2010.

A friend of public ed wins big in Queens.

CUNY IN BRIEF

Queens Mall horror show

Zombies covered in white makeup and fake blood descended on Queens Center Mall in Elmhurst October 28 to protest ghoulish wages paid to 3,100 minimum wage workers. The protesters demanded that the owner of the mall, which has received more than \$48 million in tax breaks from the city, guarantee a living wage (\$10 per hour plus healthcare benefits) to every worker hired there.

"Something is very wrong when a person works 60 hours a week... and still can just barely get by," said Jennifer Mercado, who works two jobs at the mall. The Queens Center Mall Campaign is part of a broader citywide effort to require developers who receive major taxpayer-funded subsidies to pay at least a living wage to their employees. For more information, see livingwagenc.org.

South African union pressures Wal-Mart

South Africa's service industry union (SACCAWU) is threatening to strike if Wal-Mart buys Massmart, a leading South African consumer goods distributor. The union is demanding that Wal-Mart first agree to maintain employment terms and agreements in place at Massmart stores and extend them to all Wal-Mart stores across the world.

British students mobilize against austerity

By STEVE LEBERSTEIN
Retirees Chapter

Outrage at 80% funding cut

More than 50,000 students and lecturers marched in London on November 10, protesting drastic cuts to university funding and an equally drastic increase in fees the new Tory/Liberal Democratic government had proposed. The National Union of Students had called for the demonstration, together with the University and College Union which represents teachers in higher and further education in the UK. This was so far the largest and most vehement protest against the government's proposed austerity program, one that led to occupation and trashing of Millbank Towers, Tory headquarters.

SOARING FEES

Cuts amounting to 80% of government support for teaching at Britain's universities over the next several years are pending, while an increase in student fees up to £6,000 next year and up to £9,000 later are part of the austerity package (equivalent to about \$10,000 and \$15,000, respectively). The higher education cuts are part of a much larger wave of cuts in funding of public services, at a level unprecedented in decades.

"It isn't just to ask the next generation to pay for others' mistakes. Over the next four years while college grants are cut and tuition fees triple, big business will get £8 billion in tax giveaways from the

government," said UCU general secretary Sally Hunt. "A civilized society recognizes the importance of education. It's time for politicians to recognize that education is an investment in all our futures, not a millstone around our necks."

When New Labour under Tony Blair's leadership proposed expanding access to college and university education in the UK, his government did not plan to pay for this with public funding. Blair wanted to rely on the market to raise the needed funds for higher education, which had until then been free. So he proposed a scheme of "top up" fees beginning in 2006, under which each university could set its own fees up to £3,290 depending on market demand for its courses and use the income to fund its operations.

In theory, lower-ranking universities could forgo the "top up" to attract more students, while those in greater demand could charge more. But almost every university "topped up" its fees to the maximum allowable; Blair almost lost a confidence vote in Parliament over the proposal. Those changes set the stage for the current government's proposals, which would once have seemed unimaginable.

The November protests against the new government's auster-

ity program were felt beyond London. Students, lecturers and trade unionists marched the week before in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, a former steel town where unemployment is high. They demanded that Liberal Democrat Nick Clegg, MP for Sheffield Hallam and Deputy Prime Minister, keep his campaign pledge to vote against higher student fees.

"Lifting the cap on fees to £9,000 per annum is not producing any more money for university education; it merely shifts the burden from the state to individual students," said the Trades Union Congress regional secretary for Yorkshire, Bill Adams. "At a time when more and more graduates are chasing too few jobs, students from working-class backgrounds will be put off applying for university, many terrified of leaving with debts of up to £50,000. This short-sighted action by the [coalition] government will do nothing to stimulate the economy."

In the November 10 mass demonstration much of the media attention focused on the Conservative Party HQ at Millbank Towers, which a few hundred protesters occupied, breaking windows and setting fires. The UCU and NUS disavowed the "riot" at Tory HQ: "I wish that rather than spend so much of our time talking about that reckless minority that we

had more opportunity to talk about the real issues that brought so many people out on the streets," said NUS President Aaron Porter.

Others took a different view. "This is what you get when you condemn a whole generation to a lifetime of debt, unaffordable housing and a lack of decent jobs," said John Coates, an NUS activist from Cardiff University. "This is the expression of a generation at the end of its tether."

FIRST STEP

John Harris wrote in the Guardian that the policies targeted by the mass protest were not just about higher fees "but an entire reinvention of the very ethos of our universities, whereby the idea of education as a public good takes yet another kicking..."

But British students and faculty may be starting to kick back. The Trades Union Congress sees this demonstration as a first step in a much larger movement to stop the government's plan to re-make Britain in the image that Margaret Thatcher imagined decades ago.

When the UK government's drastic austerity program was first announced, many commentators noted the contrast between the relatively quiet public reaction and the massive protests in France against cutbacks in pension benefits. The November 10 demonstration suggests that this may be starting to change.

Pat Arnow

CONTRACT SPECIAL

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

DECEMBER 2010

The PSC's bargaining agenda

An alternative to scarcity

Dear Members,

I am pleased to present the PSC's agenda for the upcoming round of collective bargaining. The bargaining agenda that follows was unanimously recommended by the union's negotiating committee and overwhelmingly approved by the Delegate Assembly. It is the product of the most extensive campaign of listening to members' contract priorities the union has undertaken. It draws on discussions by members at open contract meetings on every campus, a member survey on workload, a faculty senate survey on faculty satisfaction, hundreds of comments by individual members, more than 200 interviews conducted by the Committee of 500, and a special Delegate Assembly devoted to comments on the contract.

The wide-ranging discussions revealed a surprising level of consensus. Members are determined not to undo the progress the PSC has made through the last three contracts – securing salary increases right before the recession, maintaining health benefits, gaining paid parental leave, creating professional development funds, and more. They see some ways of improving our professional lives through measures that cost little or nothing – such as tuition waivers for our children who attend CUNY. And they are determined to move forward on the union's multi-year agenda for deep, structural change in our working conditions and our students' learning conditions.

Defending public higher education calls for an ambitious bargaining agenda

CUNY faculty and staff are aware of the economic and political realities we face as we enter this round of bargaining. Many of us teach and write on exactly these issues. But we have seen the damage done when CUNY has accepted degraded working and learning conditions in response to short-term fiscal pressures. We have seen how economic downturns have been used as an excuse to de-fund the City University, especially when its reach into new student populations challenged the status quo. We know first-hand that the erosion of salaries and working conditions at CUNY hurt a whole generation of students and led to an exodus of faculty. We refuse to let that happen again.

It is especially important that conditions at CUNY not be sacrificed now, when student enrollment has reached an all-time high and when thousands of new full-time faculty

have been hired – in part on the strength of our contracts. Nor will we accept riding out the recession by increasing CUNY's exploitation of contingent and part-time employees. For the first time in my experience as PSC president, I have heard a shared recognition among members that we cannot fix academic labor issues at CUNY if we do not fix the abusive system of adjunct labor.

How do we do all this at a time when the governor-elect has opportunistically declared that public employees are the root of the State's budget crisis? Or when the newly elected Republican majority in the House of Representatives will seek to block a second federal stimulus bill? Or when the mayor has violated an unspoken rule of collective bargaining and announced that he plans to deny raises for the UFT that were already negotiated by other unions?

Strategic, imaginative and strong

Our answer is to be strategic, imaginative and strong. It is also to work simultaneously in multiple arenas. As we advance our agenda at the bargaining table, the PSC will be fighting to change the political conditions that underlie the clamor for give-backs. The economic scarcity we will hear about at the bargaining

table is not an act of nature; it was created by political policies, and can be reversed by political policies. The PSC is part of a growing coalition pressing Albany for alternatives to imposing austerity on public workers and the vast public we serve.

I do not underestimate what it will take to change the agenda in Albany. New York State's conservative drift is part of a national and even global push to diminish the public sector and concentrate wealth to an unprecedented degree in the hands of the rich. But our fight for a fair contract begins with a fight for a fair budget. And the PSC and other unions showed last summer, when we defeated the furlough proposal, that we can prevail against the received wisdom that austerity is inevitable. The PSC leadership knows how great an effort it will take to reverse prevailing economic policies, and we will continue to work at the local, state and federal level to increase the resources available for a contract settlement.

Refusal of concessions, imaginative approaches to new areas

The most important part of this bargaining agenda, then, may be what is *not* here. The union has a

bargaining partner across the table, and I fully expect CUNY management to approach this round of negotiations with sharp concessionary demands. The PSC has had a good record over the past ten years in uniting to defeat Chancellor Goldstein's demands for give-backs, such as abolition of salary steps and removal of department chairs from the union. The pressure will probably grow in this round. But accepting concessions for us means accepting scarcity for our students. Allowing CUNY to make our compensation less competitive or our jobs less secure would erode the quality of education we offer our students.

We refuse to accept scarcity for our students, or ourselves. This bargaining agenda is about defending the quality of education at CUNY at a time when many assume that it will be eroded. And it is about daring to imagine that we can *enhance* education when many others – including CUNY management – are focused on managing scarcity.

The bargaining agenda we propose grows from members' views and keeps faith with the four priorities I announced three years ago for this phase of negotiations: continued progress on salaries, a path to advancement for HEOs, a restructured workload for full-time faculty, and significant movement toward job security and parity for adjuncts.

It also takes the opportunity to address a number of smaller issues, some of which have no cost at all, others that could easily be addressed in this round. We propose a labor/management task force to assist members with access to affordable housing and childcare; we propose an entitlement to bereavement leave; and we propose additional money for PSC-CUNY Awards and for recruiting faculty from underrepresented groups. We also make a proposal for additional support for department chairs, as their workload grows to dysfunctional proportions. We advance a coherent agenda on the use of educational technology and distance learning, an area of increasing concern to both faculty and staff. And we demand that groups of members, such as research associates, library and law school faculty, whose salary or annual leave is not aligned with those of most faculty, be treated equitably.

There are three priority areas where we propose significantly new approaches that represent potential breakthroughs.

The union's goals

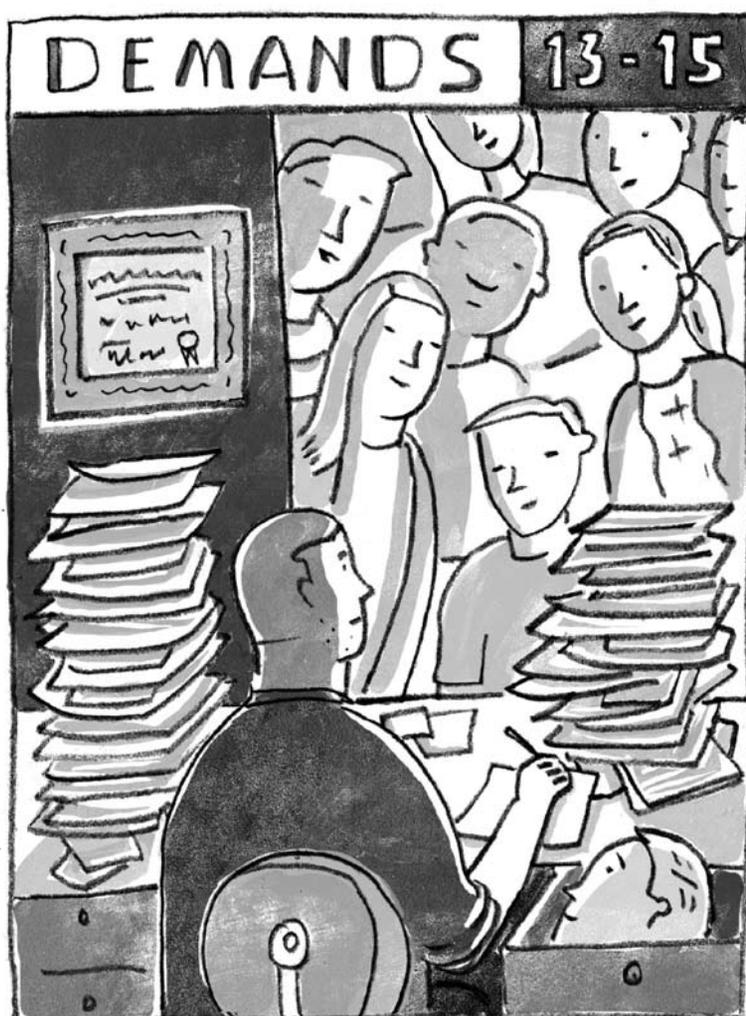
- address the current bargaining climate through a strategic approach to union priorities
- maintain progress on competitive salaries
- restructure full-time faculty workload to allow more time for students and research, and improve student retention
- achieve substantial movement toward parity and job stability for adjuncts
- create a process for advancement for HEOs
- address long-standing inequities (library faculty, law school, and others)
- improve the working lives of faculty & staff, often through low- or no-cost measures such as tuition waivers
- take other steps to improve professional life and strengthen labor relations at CUNY

Restructuring the full-time faculty workload to support students and research

The full-time faculty workload at both the senior and community colleges urgently needs to be restructured. Our heavy teaching loads actually work *against* student success. Faculty need to be freed to spend more time with individual students. There is ample research to show that a chief factor in increasing student retention and graduation rates – a goal we share with management – is time for one-on-one attention by faculty. Faculty at CUNY rarely have such time, as we cope with a heavy teaching schedule, overcrowded classes, increased demands for research and outside funding, and multiplying administrative initiatives in which we are pressed to participate.

The most direct way to restructure the full-time faculty workload would be to introduce a more manageable teaching load, one in line with other universities that make comparable research and teaching demands. Hence we propose a three-credit reduction in the annual teaching load for all colleges, for all full-time faculty. But we also offer additional ways to restructure our work. We call for strict adherence to departmental class size limits – and substantial extra compensation if they are exceeded; we propose an innovative student mentoring program that would shift some of our time from overcrowded classrooms to individual meetings; and we offer pioneering demands that support the extra time required to introduce educational technology and distance

Continued from page A4



All illustrations Contract Special: Jud Guitreau

IMPORTANT NOTE: the demands are listed below by category. The order of the list is not intended to reflect priority.

COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION

1. Salary Increases: All members of the bargaining unit, including bargaining unit members employed at the Educational Opportunity Centers and in Continuing Education series titles, shall receive *per annum* across-the-board salary increases, compounded. (Article 24)

2. Movement in Steps: For full-time employees, the five-year step and the seven-year step shall be converted to one-year steps. For adjunct and hourly employees whose salary schedules are covered in Article 24, movement from the penultimate and antepenultimate steps will take place after one year. (Article 24)

3. Movement toward Adjunct Salary Parity: The University shall make substantial, measurable progress toward pay parity for part-time teaching adjuncts, based on proportional parity with the full-time Lecturer title, through one or a combination of the following measures: increased hourly pay, longevity increments, an initiative for conversion of teaching adjuncts who have met appropriate eligibility requirements to full-time positions. (Article 24)

4. Regularize Salary Schedules: A schedule of salary steps shall be introduced for all Research Associates, for all CUNY Law School full-time and part-time faculty (with the exception of Distinguished Lecturer-Law School); for all full-time Medical professor title employees (with the exception of Distinguished Lecturer, Medical Series), and for the Medical Lecturer position. (Articles 35, 34 and 24).

5. Salary Differential for College Laboratory Technicians and Assistants to HEO: The salary differential for College Laboratory Technician series employees and Assistants to HEO who have earned Master's or doctoral degrees from an accredited institu-

tion in a field related to their job duties shall be increased. (Article 24)

6. Nighttime, Weekend and "Stand-By" Differentials: Employees in the Higher Education Officer series, the College Laboratory Technician series and the Registrar series who are assigned, as part of their scheduled workweek, to work on Saturday or Sunday or to work later than 5:00 p.m. on a weekday shall receive a pay differential for the hours assigned outside of normal business hours. Employees in the titles above who are required to remain on stand-by or on-call status for hours in addition to their normal workweek shall receive appropriate additional compensation.

7. New Full-Time Faculty: New full-time faculty members whose initial appointment is on September 1 of any given year shall be placed on payroll on August 1 of that year in order to enable them to complete the advance preparation required for assuming a new faculty position. New full-time faculty whose teaching appointment begins on February 1 of any given year shall be placed on payroll on January 1 of that year.

8. Welfare Fund Enhancements and Equity in Adjunct Health Insurance: There shall be a substantial increase in contributions to the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund for all active and retired members of the bargaining unit, including employees at the Educational Opportunity Centers. Eligible part-time instructional staff members shall be included in the New York City Health Benefits Program. (Article 26)

9. Educational Opportunity Centers: Salary parity with the other units of

the City University in comparable positions shall be maintained. The Supplemental Agreement on Educational Opportunity Centers shall be amended to improve certain working conditions and benefits. (Supplemental Agreement on Educational Opportunity Centers)

10. Hunter Campus Schools: Improvements shall be made in the terms and conditions of the employees in the bargaining unit at the Hunter Campus Schools, including through enhancing the salary for Assistant Teachers. (Article 24)

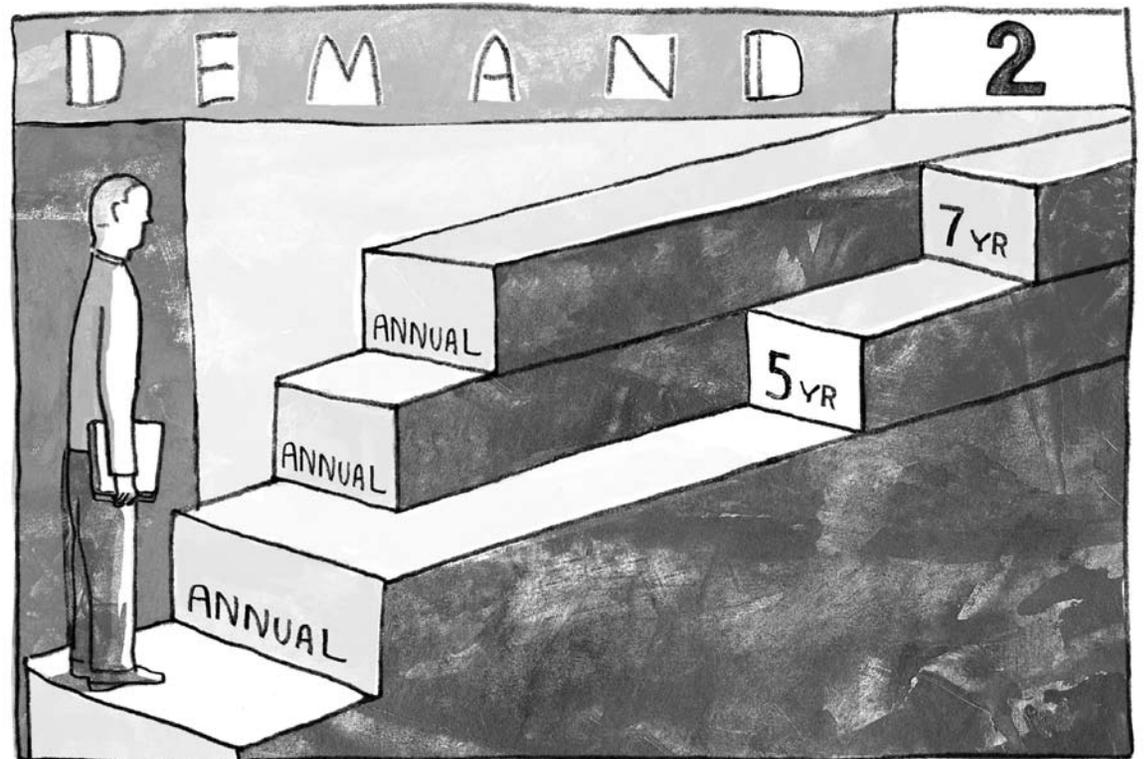
11. Pension Equity: The University shall provide part-time instructional staff with the option to participate in the Optional Retirement Programs. (Article 1)

12. CLIP Instructors: Teachers in the CUNY Language Immersion Program shall be placed in full-time positions under Article 1 (or in a newly established full-time position) on the appropriate salary schedule, with all the rights and benefits of full-time employees. (Article 1)

13. Full-Time Faculty Workload: The workload of full-time teaching faculty shall be restructured to enhance the quality of education, to support improved student retention and graduation rates, and to allow faculty to contribute meaningfully to the academic community through research, scholarship and creative work. As part of accomplishing this goal, the maxi-

PSC Bargaining A

Contract demands approved by the Delegate As



the City University in comparable positions shall be maintained. The Supplemental Agreement on Educational Opportunity Centers shall be amended to improve certain working conditions and benefits. (Supplemental Agreement on Educational Opportunity Centers)

14. Class Size: In the event the University violates departmental class size limits without the written consent of both the instructor and the department chair, full-time instructors shall be credited with additional teaching contact hour credits equivalent to the number of teaching contact hours of the course; part-time instructors shall receive equivalent compensation.

15. Support for Student Mentoring: Full-time faculty who choose to participate in a student-mentoring program to be designed jointly by the parties shall receive teaching contact hour credits for mentoring five students per semester. Both faculty and student participants will be required to participate in assessment and accountability measures designed by the parties.

16. Library Faculty: All Library faculty, regardless of when hired, shall have the same number of annual leave days as other full-time faculty. Effective on the date on which Article 14.3 b) is changed to provide annual leave for Library faculty equivalent to the annual leave of other full-time faculty, Library faculty professional development leaves shall be discontinued. (Articles 14 and 25)

17. Additional Support for Department Chairs: Department chairs (and, where appropriate, their deputies) shall receive additional support

through provision of one or a combination of the following: additional reassigned time, additional financial compensation, and additional access to support personnel.

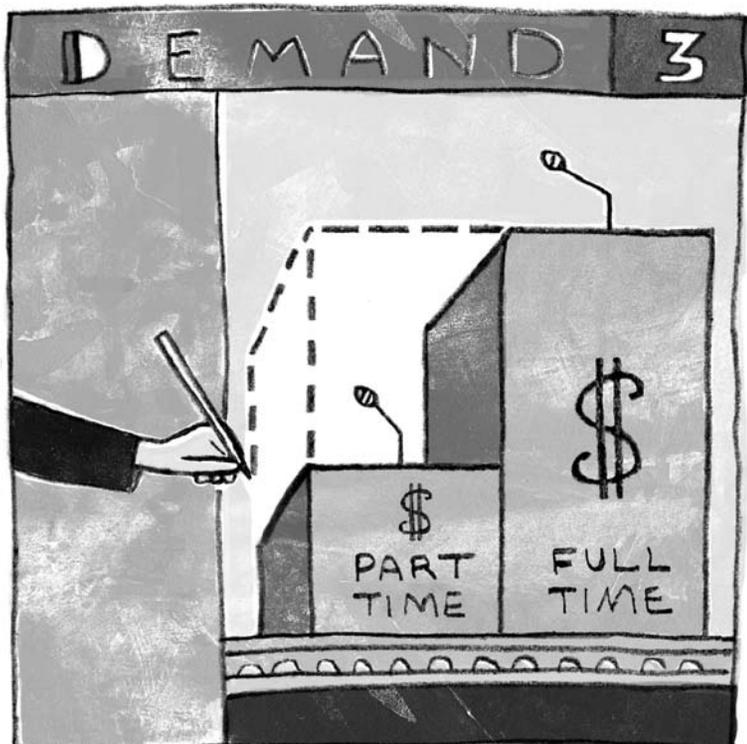
18. Educational Technology and Distance Learning: The use of Educational Technology and Distance Learning by instructional staff members falls within contractual provisions, professional review procedures, shared governance, and long-established governance practices, but its special impact on certain terms and conditions of employment needs to be further addressed through collective bargaining. Educational Technology and Distance Learning (ET and DL) shall be understood to include but not be limited to: web-assisted courses, asynchronous courses, and hybrid courses.

Instructional staff shall receive adequate compensation (in either salary or credit for time, or both) for the professional development, course development and additional instructional time that is required by the use of ET and DL.

Instructional staff shall have the right to:

- Ownership of their work product
- Control of the rebroadcast of their work product
- Adequate technological support services to deliver course content
- Selection of the teaching platform most appropriate for their work
- Continued and expanded use of University resources to create and support the CUNY Academic Commons and other similar faculty-driven endeavors.

An Educational Technology and Distance Learning Labor/Management Committee shall be estab-



Agenda

Assembly on November 4

lished and shall recommend to the parties practices and policies as necessary.

19. Equity in Teaching Load at New York City College of Technology: The parties shall complete their negotiations to identify funding to reduce the full-time professorial teaching load at New York City College of Technology to parity with other four-year CUNY colleges, 21 hours.

WORKFORCE STABILITY AND ADVANCEMENT

20. System of Advancement for HEO-Series Employees: A system enabling advancement for HEO-series employees shall be introduced, such that employees in the titles Assistant to HEO, HEO Assistant, and HEO Associate shall be eligible for advancement in salary and the designation "Advanced." Advancement shall be determined by peer review, subject to final approval of the President and the Board of Trustees. Advancement shall result in movement to the HEO-series salary schedule of the title classified immediately above the employee's title, on the first step that is higher than the employee's current salary. Decisions about advancement shall be based on such criteria as excellence in performance and expansion of duties; such decisions shall be subject to Articles 9 and 20. (Articles 9 and 13)

21. HEO Classification and Appointment: The reclassification procedures shall be improved, to create greater fairness and transparency. A Certificate of Continual Administrative Service shall be granted to HEO-series employees after the fifth year

of service; the first appointment for HEO-series employees shall be a one-year appointment, and the second and third reappointments shall be two-year appointments, with appropriate amendments to Articles 9 and 13.11. (Articles 9 and 13)

22. Adjunct Workforce Stability: A system of job stability for teaching adjuncts shall be introduced, such that adjuncts earn a Certificate of Continuous Employment in the adjunct title after teaching an average of 12 contact teaching hours a year in the same department in any 5 of the previous 7 years, and successfully undergoing a review by the department. An adjunct who has achieved a CCE shall be entitled to teach a minimum of 6 contact teaching hours per semester and would not be subject to non-reappointment, except for just cause. Teaching adjuncts who have completed an average of 12 contact teaching hours per year in any 10 of the past 12 years by the day following the expiration date of the 2007-2010 Agreement shall receive the CCE upon the effective date of this provision. (Article 12)

SUPPORT FOR AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

23. Tuition Waivers: 1) Children and stepchildren of full-time members of the instructional staff shall be granted tuition waivers for undergraduate courses at CUNY. 2) The eligibility requirement for tuition waivers for teaching adjuncts shall be reduced from ten semesters to six, and may be established through service CUNY-wide. 3) Non-teach-

ing adjuncts who have worked at least 6 hours per week at the same college for 6 consecutive semesters (not including the summer session), and who have been appointed to work at least 6 hours per week in a fall or spring semester shall be granted tuition waivers for up to one course that semester. 4) Substitute service immediately preceded by and immediately followed by adjunct service shall be counted as continuous service for the purpose of determining eligibility for tuition remission. (Article 29)

24. Paid Parental Leave: The pilot program for paid parental leave, signed into agreement on March 19, 2009, shall be established as a permanent program and enhanced. (Article 16)

25. PSC-CUNY Awards: The contribution to the PSC-CUNY Awards program shall be increased by at least \$500,000. (Article 25)

26. Increasing Racial, Ethnic and Gender Diversity: A Diverse Faculty Recruitment and Retention Fund of \$500,000 shall be established to assist academic departments in recruiting and retaining full-time faculty from underrepresented groups, bringing candidates from such groups to campus, and undertaking other initiatives to increase diversity.

27. Improved Access to Childcare and Housing: A labor/management task force shall be formed to address the urgent need to provide improved access to affordable housing in the New York City area, especially for new members of the faculty and staff, and access to high-quality, affordable childcare for all relevant members of the bargaining unit.

28. Adjunct Professional Development Fund: The Adjunct Professional Development Fund shall be made permanent, supported by recurring funds; and non-teaching adjuncts who meet eligibility requirements agreed to by the parties shall be entitled to apply for grants from the Fund. (Appendix C)

29. Health and Safety: Article 39.1 shall be amended to add the following requirements for the City University: to furnish to each of its employees a place of employment free of physical or environmental conditions that interfere with teaching and learning or with the ability of employees to perform their assigned duties; and to require that new construction and large renovation projects conform to ASHRAE standards. Article 39.2 shall be amended to establish campus health and safety committees at each college, and to establish the requirement that the college president or highest college official with responsibility for health and safety meet twice each semester with the campus committee. (Article 39)

30. Bereavement Leave: All full-time instructional staff members shall be entitled to five days of paid bereavement leave for a death in the immediate family (defined as spouse, domestic partner, parent, stepparent, child, stepchild, sibling, grandparent or grandchild). In the case of bereavement leave for a death in the immediate family, the leave provided for part-time instructional staff named in Article 14.8 shall be available without the need for a request. (Article 14)

EQUITY, ENHANCEMENTS, GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINE

31. Graduate Employees: The University shall support the Union's effort to achieve improvements in the benefits available to graduate employees under NYSSHIP.

Graduate Assistants shall receive appropriate University-wide credit toward movement in salary schedule when they are appointed to adjunct positions.

A labor/management committee shall be formed to explore ways of enhancing opportunities for full-time faculty appointments for recipients of the Ph.D. degree from CUNY, especially for Ph.D. recipients from underrepresented racial, ethnic and gender groups.

32. Part-Time Instructional Staff: Teaching adjuncts who have taught for at least 5 of the preceding 7 semesters, and non-teaching adjuncts who have been appointed for at least six hours per week during 5 of the preceding 7 semesters, shall accrue sick leave.

An employee currently serving in a Substitute title who is subsequently appointed to an adjunct title shall receive written notice of appointment on the same schedule as an employee currently serving in an adjunct title. (Article 10.1(a)3.)

The University shall provide the first paycheck of the semester for part-time instructional staff no later than 3 weeks after the first day of the semester; employees for whom a paycheck is not provided by the paycheck date shall receive an immediate advance of 80 percent of the gross salary due on the paycheck date and a similar advance for any subsequent period or periods for which paychecks

are not provided. The balance due to the employee for each pay period shall be included in the first regular paycheck.

33. Continuing Education Teachers: The Supplemental Agreement on Continuing Education shall be amended to include:

provisions for regular observations and evaluations of Continuing Education faculty, consistent with Articles 18 and 19 of the Agreement;

provisions for a grievance/arbitration procedure consistent with Article 20 of the Agreement.

34. Increased Reassigned Time for Union Work: The PSC shall be granted reassigned time for negotiation of successor agreements, in addition to the reassigned time for handling of grievances and implementation of this Agreement under Article 6. The additional reassigned time shall be granted during periods when successor agreements are being negotiated, and shall be allocated by the PSC to bargaining unit members who participate in collective bargaining with the University. (Article 6)

35. Appointment, Evaluation, Grievance and Discipline: Appointment and Non-Reappointment: The following shall be added to both Article 9.9 and Article 9.10: "If after ten (10) calendar days, as above, the written statement of reasons has not been furnished to the affected employee, the employee shall be deemed reappointed for one year."

The time bar to complaint regarding non-compliance under 18.2(b)2.b) or c) and 18.3 shall be removed by deleting the third sentence of Article 18.2(b)2.d) and the third sentence of Article 18.3(d).

Article 20.4 shall be amended to allow 60 working days to file a grievance.

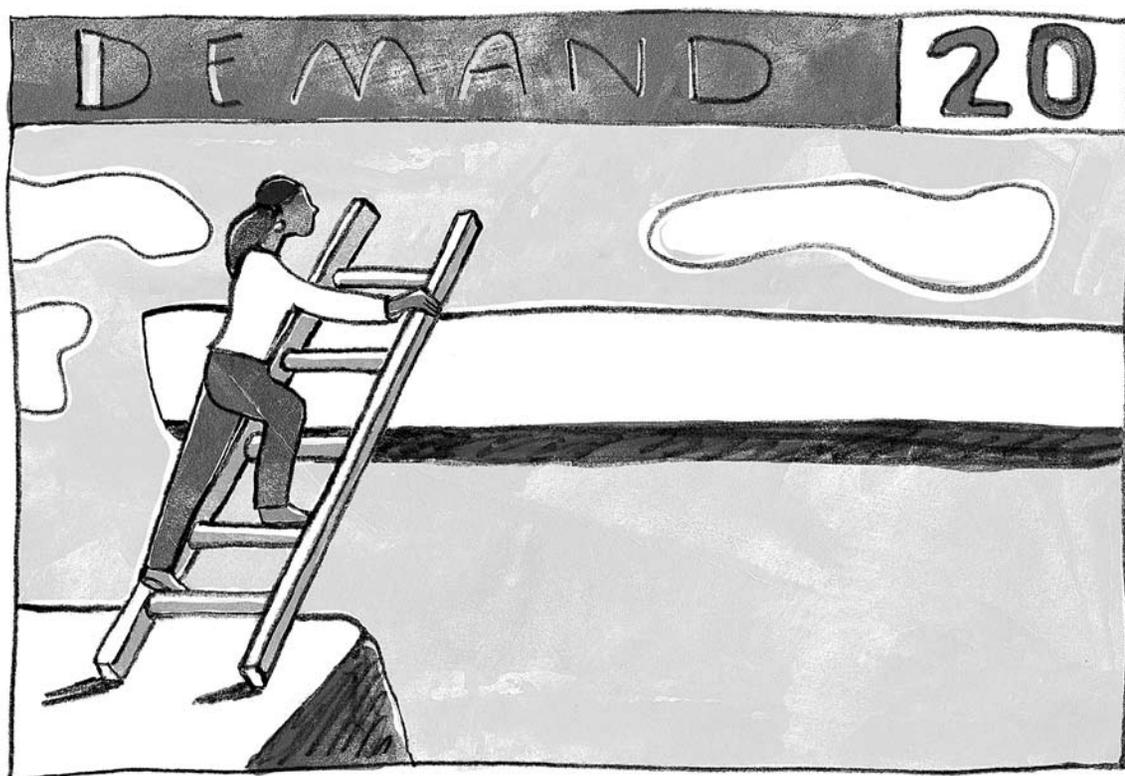
If the University fails to render a Step One or Step Two grievance decision within the contractual time limit, the grievance shall be deemed sustained.

A new section, 20.9, shall be added: "In all investigative circumstances and any situations that could reasonably lead to future discipline, employees must be told of their rights to union representation."

The following shall be deleted from Article 21: "staff in HEO series titles shall be subject to discharge as provided in Article 21.9," and all of 21.9 shall be deleted.

The following shall be added, either to 21.1, or as a new section, 21.14: "Any and all actions resulting from any and all internal investigations pursuant to any University policy must proceed through Article 21, and, in all investigative circumstances and any situations that could reasonably lead to future discipline, employees must be told of their rights to union representation."

Note: The Professional Staff Congress reserves the right to amend or supplement these demands during the course of collective bargaining.



An alternative for CUNY

Continued from page A1

learning. CUNY's research expectations – for both the community and senior colleges – are at odds with its unusually heavy teaching load. While we embrace high standards of scholarship, we recognize that those standards either ring hollow or lead to burn-out if they are not accompanied by conditions in which they can be met. Restructuring the full-time faculty workload would in fact *increase* productivity, if productivity is understood to mean contributing to learning and the production of new knowledge.

Opening a path to advancement for Higher Education Officer employees

There are more than 3,000 professional staff in the Higher Education Officer series at CUNY, and they are the only major group of PSC members who work under a system of classification rather than promotion. HEOs provide essential services to students and colleges: They are financial aid counselors, registrars, program directors and technology personnel. To move to a higher position, HEOs who have

no issue cuts a deeper fault-line through our workforce or requires more political force to resolve than the two-tier labor system. Through the past three contracts, the PSC has made pathbreaking reforms for CUNY adjuncts, but we have not dismantled the adjunct system and replaced it with a system that better serves our students and ourselves. It took CUNY 30 years to arrive at the point where most of the

Job stability and movement toward parity for adjuncts

time faculty fairly when CUNY can hire part-timers at a fraction of the cost? And how can a university countenance allowing half the faculty to work for embarrassing wages, with no meaningful job security, and often to be hired without even an interview? Something is seriously out of joint.

While acknowledging the challenge of addressing the two-tier labor system at a time of economic constriction, the bargaining agenda we present registers that we cannot wait any longer to make systemic change. Thus we present three major demands: 1) to include eligible adjuncts in the City health program; 2) to create a new system of contractual job security for qualifying adjuncts; and 3) to make significant, measurable progress toward salary parity on a *pro rata* basis with the full-time lecturer position.

The demand for a system of job security is new, and carries no cost. It is a considered proposal to stabilize the faculty workforce by allowing adjuncts who have taught for a significant period and who successfully complete a rigorous review to attain a Certificate of Continuous Employment, *in the adjunct position*. Many departments already observe an informal system of seniority for adjuncts; our demand is to make the system formal and contractual. This idea may be new for some; I urge you to be open to how it would benefit students and the entire University, and I look forward to the discussions we will have about it in the coming months. (The bargaining team was happy to receive a petition signed by hundreds of members that included a demand for three-year appointments for qualifying adjuncts; the proposal we have advanced is both more tested and more ambitious.)

The most difficult issue to address is bringing adjunct salaries to parity, on a *pro rata* basis, with full-time lecturer salaries. This will not be achieved in one contract. Cutting costs by hiring adjuncts has been the linchpin of CUNY's

budget strategy; we do not expect to reverse that policy overnight. But the inequities of the adjunct system must be addressed, and our demands make a serious commitment to that goal. The petition we received from members calls for a single approach – an additional \$30 per hour for each adjunct teaching hour. After serious consideration, the bargaining team has recommended a more strategic approach: to use one or a combination of increased hourly pay, longevity increments and an initiative for conversion of teaching adjuncts to full-time positions. In the months ahead, I hope to speak to you about some of these initiatives, including proposals that recognize that we are all one faculty. We should continue to press for new professorial lines, as well as investment in the faculty CUNY has.

An alternative to scarcity

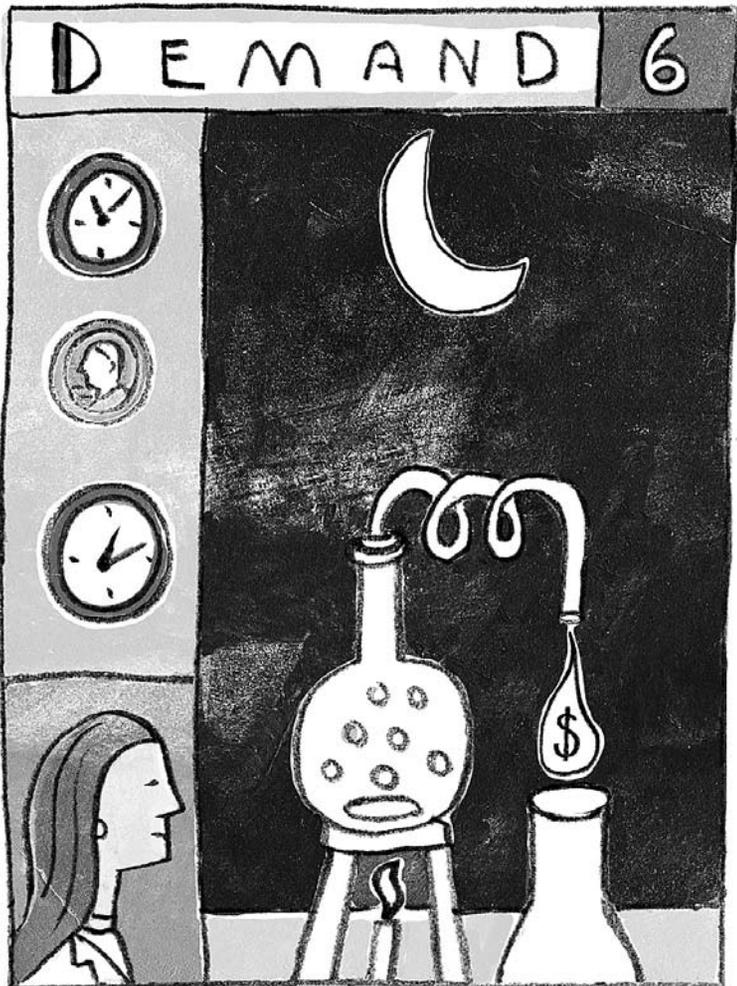
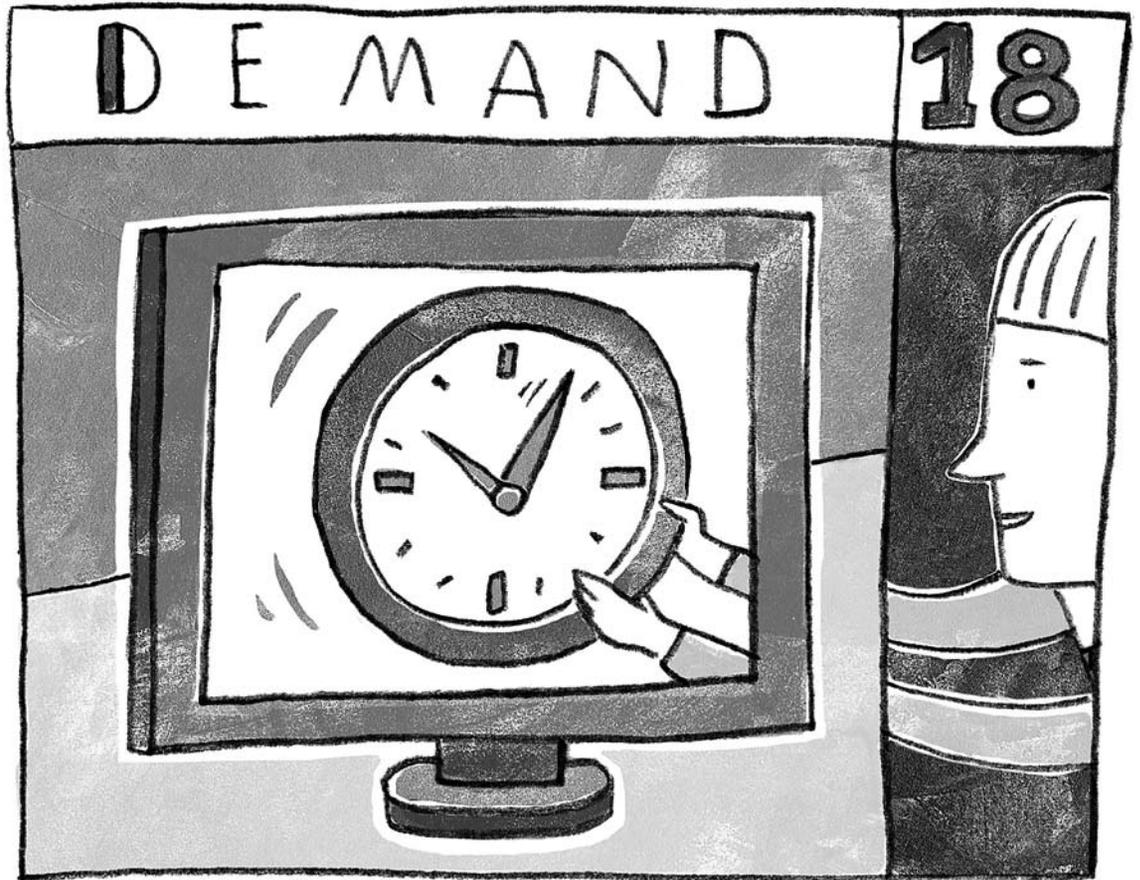
The primary goal for the bargaining team was to develop a coherent agenda that would unite the

concerns of our membership and uphold the principle that public higher education cannot be sacrificed to economic austerity. We ask you to consider the attached document as a whole – as an agenda for the union – and not just as a set of independent demands.

Last week at John Jay College, a young faculty member said to me after a meeting on the contract that he was glad the union had decided “not to meet scarcity with scarcity.” If unions in this economic moment do not demand an alternative to scarcity, who will?

It is in the best tradition of labor unions to refuse to accept austerity for working people, and in the best tradition of the academy to question received wisdom. Those are the traditions we hope to unite by offering an ambitious, strategic and principled bargaining agenda for the next contract.

In solidarity,
Barbara Bowen
President, PSC

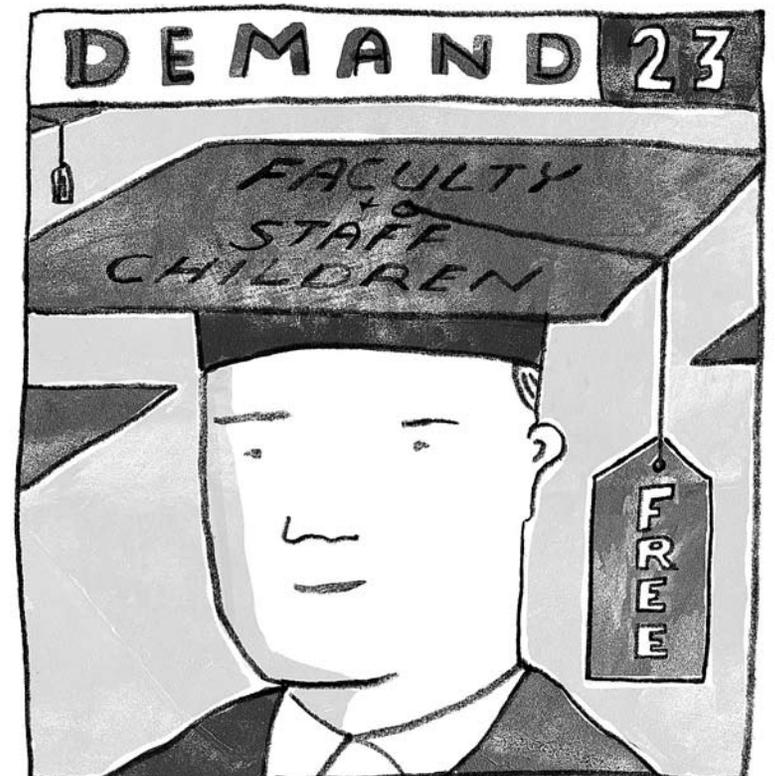


not yet reached the top classification must either attain a new, different job at CUNY or show that their current job has changed so significantly that it is now in a higher category. We believe that every employee should have a transparent path to advancement.

For the first time, we propose in this set of demands an additional route to advancement for HEOs who are not in the highest classification. While also calling for improvements in the current classification process, we propose a system to enable advancement based on the recommen-

core work of the University – teaching – is done by underpaid, under-supported and under-evaluated adjuncts, and over those 30 years the underpayment of the teaching workforce cut CUNY's costs by hundreds of millions of dollars.

But the system shortchanges us all – starting with the adjuncts themselves, and including students and full-time colleagues. How can CUNY assert that it maintains academic freedom when half of the teaching workforce is dependent on being rehired each semester? Where is the incentive to pay full-



PSC files grievance for adjunct pay

By PETER HOGNESS

This semester, CUNY has been refusing to pay some adjuncts for all the hours they have worked. For adjuncts assigned a teaching load in excess of contractual limits, the University has refused to pay them for those additional hours unless a waiver is signed. Failure to pay for hours worked is a clear violation of the union contract, and the PSC has filed a number of grievances against CUNY's new practice.

CUNY MUST PAY

"CUNY's position is simply nonsensical," said PSC Director of Legal Affairs Peter Zwiebach. "Their policy is that people working these hours should not be paid anything – but even CUNY would have to concede that when someone works, they must be paid. There's simply

no good-faith argument that they should not."

When CUNY announced this policy, the PSC specifically brought this contradiction to CUNY's attention. When management refused to revise the policy, a grievance was filed. The grievance demands that adjuncts who work in excess of the contractual limits be paid for this work on time, regardless of the status of a waiver request.

The contract's Article 15.2 sets part-timer teaching load at a maximum of nine hours at one CUNY campus, plus one course of not more than six hours at another. In certain emergency cases, the PSC has agreed to waive these limits. Last year management's increasing violations of these contractual limits led to more than 500 waiver requests per semester, and hundreds of cases where the

limits were exceeded and a waiver was not even requested. In response, the union filed several grievances and made clear it would insist that the contract be enforced. As a result, this year the number of waiver requests is a fraction of the level last fall. The union has granted waiver requests in some cases and denied them in others.

When a waiver has been denied, in some cases management has left the adjunct in that classroom, teaching hours in excess of the contractual limits. The union has filed another grievance demanding that these faculty members be paid at the full-time rate for their title. "Management is employing these people as full-timers," said Zwiebach, "so it must pay them at a full-time rate."

In other cases where a waiver was

denied, the University has taken the adjunct out of the classroom. The union has filed another grievance on behalf of those adjuncts, insisting that they be paid for the balance of the semester at the adjunct rate.

RESPECT

For hours worked over the contractual limit, says Zwiebach, the only possible dispute is over whether the member should be paid at full-time rates or part-time rates. "The union's position is that, at a minimum, these members must be paid at the adjunct rate for all hours assigned while a waiver request is pending," Zwiebach told *Clarion*. "Even where the PSC argues that an adjunct is in fact owed more, there is no basis for paying them nothing. CUNY needs to respect the contract, respect these faculty members, and pay them now."

City Tech: Voorhees update

By JOHN TARLETON

City Tech's administration has begun to respond to concerns raised by faculty, staff and students following last month's *Clarion* coverage of problems with the renovation of the college's Voorhees Building.

Faculty, staff and students had raised concerns about noise and air quality issues, and the front-page article provoked campus-wide discussion. Discussion of the issue at the October meeting of City Tech's College Council began with a screen projection of *Clarion*'s coverage. PSC Chapter Chair Bob Cermele spoke for several minutes about the situation at Voorhees, and noted that the college administration had flatly refused to meet

any further with the union about the matter.

The spotlight has started to bring some change. City Tech President Russell Hotzler subsequently instructed Vice President for Administration and Finance Miguel Cairo to set up regular meetings between the department chairs of the half-dozen departments housed in Voorhees and contractor representatives.

"They are definitely feeling the heat," Cermele said. "The extra attention this problem has received has had an impact."

REPORTS

City Tech has offered to make biweekly construction reports available, but Cermele says daily reports of construction activities are needed so that faculty working in the building can adjust their

classes and programs accordingly.

"They need specific information," Cermele said. "We want to get the place safer, healthier and less noisy."

The situation at Voorhees has also attracted the interest of the Public Employee Safety and Health Bureau (PESH). According to Jacquie Elliot, co-chair of the union's Health and Safety Watchdogs, an inspector from PESH conducted air quality tests on the seventh and eighth floors of the building on October 28 following an anonymous complaint. As *Clarion* went to press, PESH had not yet released the results.

ERI deadlines

Full-time employees who are retiring under CUNY's Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) have deadline dates that must be followed to be eligible to retire under this incentive.

You must file two forms: an official ERI-2010 Election form with your college Human Resources office, no later than 5:00 pm on January 6, 2011, *and* a retirement application with your retirement system, no later than 5:00 pm on January 13, 2011.

You are encouraged to bring these forms to your college HR office and your retirement system prior to those dates. If you change your mind and wish to remain a full-time employee at CUNY, you can retrieve these documents until January 26, 2011.

For more information about the ERI, see www.psc-cuny.org/ERI2010.htm or contact your college HR office.



College Lab Techs discuss solutions to shared problems

Twenty-seven College Laboratory Technicians (CLTs) from 10 campuses gathered for a full-day retreat on Nov. 13. They discussed health and safety issues and how to build the collective power needed to improve their working conditions. "It was a great opportunity for lab technicians to talk about what's going on at their campuses," said CLT Chapter Vice Chair Alan Pearlman.

Clarion DECEMBER 2010

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Editor: Peter Hogness / Associate Editor: John Tarleton / Designer: Margarita Aguilar / Proofreader: Jean Leung
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CALENDAR

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3: 4 pm / Part-Time Committee meeting, PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th Fl. For more info contact Marcia Newfield at mnewfield@psccmail.org.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 6: 1 pm / Retirees meeting, PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th Fl. Special guest speaker: Frances Fox Piven discussing "The Great Socialist Subversion: Challenging Authority." For more info contact Jacob Judd at jjudd18@optonline.net. (For more by Frances Fox Piven, see P. 11)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10: 6 pm / Labor Goes to the Movies, PSC Union Hall, 61 Broadway, 16th Fl. Screening of *Crossing Arizona* (Joseph Mathew and Dan DeVivo, 2006), a documentary that takes an up-close look at life on the US-Mexico border through the eyes of human activists, Native Americans on their reservation, a Minuteman co-founder, journalists, ranchers, undocumented workers, police, border patrol, and politicians. \$2 suggested donation.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18: 9:30 am - 12:30 pm / International Committee meeting. For location or other info, e-mail Renate Bridenthal at bridenthalr@yahoo.com.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23: 3 pm / The Retirees Chapter and the PSC Women's Committee are sponsoring a PSC theater event at the Working Theater's production of *Honey Brown Eyes*, set during the Bosnian War in 1992 (see tinyurl.com/HoneyBE). Reserve your \$20 ticket today – last year's event sold out! For more info, e-mail Steve Leberstein at sleberstein@psccmail.org.

Part-timer rights info

Are you a new part-timer at CUNY? Do you know what's required for adjuncts to qualify for health insurance coverage? Or how to apply for professional development grants for as much as \$3,000 to support scholarly work? To find out more, visit the PSC-CUNY website at psc-cuny.org/part_timer_rights.htm. This webpage also provides information on the rights guaranteed under the union's contract to Continuing Ed and CLIP teachers, graduate assistants and fellows.

CULTURE WARS

At the center of a sudden storm

By **MOUSTAFA BAYOUMI**
Brooklyn College

This past August, I briefly occupied a small corner of the culture wars, and I felt a bit like a fish in a fish-bowl. Everybody was staring at a distorted image of me, and all I could do was blink and blow bubbles.

I teach at Brooklyn College, where the undergraduate writing program has for the last several years assigned a “common reading” to all incoming freshmen. This year, the program selected my book, *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America*, in which I tell the stories of seven Arab American men and women, all in their 20s and living in Brooklyn, coping with a post-9/11 world.

The criteria for the common reading are that the book should preferably be set in New York City, have a significant immigration component (since many of our students are themselves immigrants or come from immigrant backgrounds), and be in the form of life stories. It should also be written by a living writer, since the author is invited to the campus to talk about the book with students. My book fit the bill. (Previous readings included Frank McCourt’s *Angela’s Ashes* and Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.)

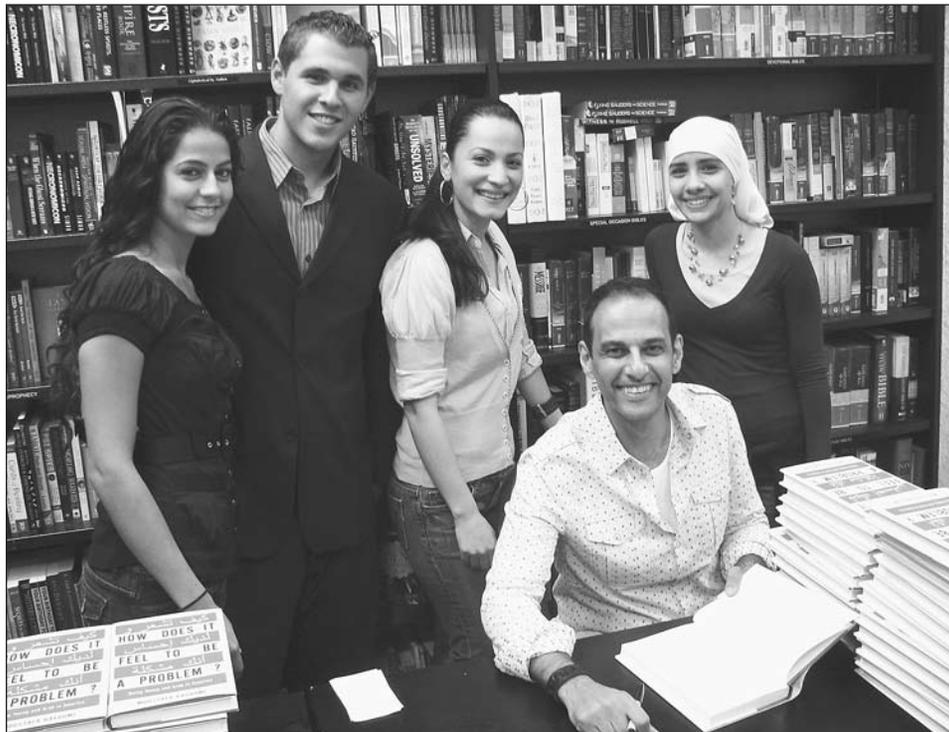
Everything was fine until about a week before classes began. That’s when the chair of my department called me to tell me that the college had received a small number of complaints from alumni and an emeritus faculty member about the selection. She assured me that the college was standing by its decision, and the dean of undergraduate studies subsequently told me the same thing. But I knew that in today’s wired world, administrators worry about complaints hitting the Internet and going “viral.” And that’s exactly what happened.

DISBELIEF

The tempest was largely kicked off when Bruce Kesler, a conservative California-based blogger and Brooklyn College alumnus, wrote a blog post labeling me a “radical pro-Palestinian” professor and calling the selection of the book an “official policy to inculcate students with a political point of view.” He said he was removing a “significant bequest” to Brooklyn College from his will. In a different blog, under the title “Brooklyn College-istan,” a retired Brooklyn College professor wrote that assigning my book “smacks of indoctrination” and “will intimidate students who have a different point of view.”

At first, my first reaction was one of disbelief. Wow, I thought, is my writing really that powerful? But on closer inspection, it became clear to me that my detractors hadn’t actually read the book. Next, I realized how insulting these objections were to our students, suggesting that they are unable to form independent judgments of what they read.

I hoped the noise would fade, but within days, the dial was turned up to 11. Articles appeared in *The Daily News*, *Jewish Week*, and *Gothamist* and were picked up by *New York* magazine and other outlets. The *New York Post* ran an op-ed by a retired City College history professor, which deftly illustrated that one need only read a book’s Amazon.com page to reach conclusions about it. The op-ed called the selection of my book a “scan-



Moustafa Bayoumi, associate professor of English at Brooklyn College, at a book signing.

dal” and claimed that it paints “New Yorkers in particular as completely Islamophobic” (patently untrue). I received calls at home from television news shows, and Channel 11 even broadcast my picture, calling me “this guy!” in its pre-commercial teaser.

I was ready to hide behind a piece of coral. Both *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* pointed out that the controversy was almost entirely driven by off-campus conservatives, but it didn’t matter. Now I – not those manufacturing the storm – had become the controversial one. Brooklyn College was not advancing a liberal education by having students read a book about the post-9/11 life experiences of young Arab Americans, but was, rather, “pushing” an “anti-American, pro-Islam” book – at least according to rightwingnews.com.

I was getting a very personalized education about how all things Muslim are at the center of today’s culture wars. I might have found the fracas amusing were it not unpleasant to be called all kinds of names in public. I certainly didn’t recognize my book or myself in the descriptions being tossed about. I mean, the only radical organization I belong to is the Park Slope Food Co-op (from which, I must confess, I’ve been suspended several times).

TWO YEARS OF CALM

My surprise at being at the center of a controversy, even a trumped-up one, wasn’t based on naivete. Rather, it came from the fact that the book had been out for two years already without sparking a storm. The *Wall Street Journal* profiled it and me in 2008. *Publishers Weekly* gave it a starred review (no doubt with an invisible crescent surrounding that star), CNN and NPR interviewed me about the book, and Francine Prose reviewed it favorably for *O Magazine*. Vermont’s Johnson State College selected it for their common reading in 2009 without any controversy that I’m aware of, and I had already spoken about it at a number of high schools and colleges, in the United States and Canada, and in front of church leaders, a Jewish congregation, and

several community groups. The book even won a 2008 American Book Award (not an Anti-American Book Award).

Opposition to my book seems more symptomatic of our moment than produced by its contents. And Brooklyn College’s reading list isn’t the only one under attack. The Texas State Board of Education recently voted to limit references to Islam in their high school textbooks, even though, as the Associated Press noted, “the resolution cites world history books no longer used in Texas schools.”

The Texas resolution was another attempt to create a fake controversy. It’s contrived to give the idea that Islam is on an ideological march in the US and that those who sound the alarm are America’s noble defenders. The fact that this bears little relation to reality is immaterial.

Understanding this topsy-turvy world, where assailants driven by ideology paint their targets as the ideological ones, also explains the rhetoric around Park51, the so-called “Ground Zero mosque” (not at Ground Zero and not a mosque). Here the flip comes mostly around the words “tolerance” and “sensitivity.” Park51’s opponents, like Sarah Palin, claim that their opposition to the project isn’t based on bigotry – though it’s hard to see how they aren’t equating all Muslims with terrorism. Instead, they say it’s the project’s backers who are “insensitive” to the memory of September 11. But that argument is a slight of hand. It says that Muslim Americans can only choose between two kinds of inequality: accept second-class citizenship, or be portrayed as the intolerant ones.

We have seen this kind of shadow play before. When New York City educator Debbie Almontaser proposed opening a dual-language Arabic-English public high school in New York in 2007, she was immediately attacked personally, and the very idea of teaching Arabic (prioritized, incidentally, as a “national security language” by the Department of Education) was maligned. Conservative columnist Daniel Pipes wrote that “Arabic-language instruction is inevitably laden with pan-Arabist and Islamist bag-

gage” – thus finally explaining the legions of Islamist Arab Christians in the world.

What is going on here? As soon as Muslims such as Debbie Almontaser, Imam Faisal Abdul Rauf, or myself are on the cusp of entering the mainstream fully (through a school, a community center, or a common reading), we are hit with a wave of opposition that attempts to render us or our work invisible. Never mind that we are, by all reasonable accounts, downright moderates along the political spectrum. The trick is simply to attach the word “radical” to the word “Muslim” and, like a magician, you can make the actual person in question disappear in a cloud of suspicion.

For the president of the United States, the term “First Muslim” will suffice.

At a time when *The Economist* reports that 55% of Americans hold unfavorable views of Islam and *Time* found that nearly one-third of Americans believe Muslims should not be permitted to run for president (too late!), I would like to think that the opposition to our work illustrates the need for it even more profoundly. Knowledge about Arabs and Islam is woefully inadequate today. Projects like the dual-language school, Park51, and a common reading of my book can help Americans experience the Arabic language, Islam, or Arab American youth culture through a kind of empathy – which holds more promise than even sympathy for putting the culture wars behind us. Sympathy asks for charity; empathy produces understanding.

IDEOLOGY

Ideology, on the other hand, can blind people to the point where they won’t even admit the experiences of others. To be invisible means to be twisted beyond recognition, to have others speak for you, or simply to be not seen. Borrowing from Ralph Ellison, it is as though we Muslim and Arab Americans have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When our opponents approach us, they see only our surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination – indeed, everything and anything except us. Today’s culture wars are being fought on a terrain that traverses the worn debates around liberal education, the poverty of political discourse fomented by the Web, the unrelenting vilifications of Islam and Muslims, and the zero-sum game in which the politics of the Middle East are too often played out in the United States. In the wings is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Part of the opposition to me may stem from another book, *Midnight on the Mavi Marmara*, that I have just edited, about the Israeli attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla. (As I make clear in that book’s introduction, I’m a believer in co-existence, in favor of a negotiated settlement, and opposed to terrorism and occupation.) But criticism or acceptance of the Israeli government’s actions shouldn’t determine acceptable speech in the United States. In any case, students were not assigned that book.

Or maybe there’s another source of the animus against me. Back in May, I published a short essay in *The New York Times Magazine* describing my experiences as an Arab extra on the set of *Sex and the City 2*. I was mildly critical of the movie. Maybe that set some people off – after all, the show has a lot of hardcore fans.

Brooklyn book bashed by bloggers.

A longer version of this article appeared in the Oct. 29 *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

THE ELECTIONS & BEYOND

Why the Democrats faltered in 2010

By FRANCES FOX PIVEN
CUNY Graduate Center

As the smoke clears from the debacle of the 2010 midterm election, the outline of the politics of the next two years is emerging. There will be no new stimulus legislation, no matter the continuing high level of unemployment and the spread of part-time and insecure jobs. State and local government will continue to buckle under the strain of rising safety net expenditures and shrinking revenues. The goal of labor law reform, so that employees could join a union without fear of getting fired, will seem delusional, an impossible chimera. Instead, the Republican-led committees will turn the House of Representatives – the “People’s House” – into a circus of investigations of paranoid right wing charges.

Exactly what happened to bring us to this sorry pass after the enthusiasm of 2008? In what follows, I draw on data presented in a report by Lorraine Minnite for Project Vote, the national non-partisan voting rights organization.

Some of the electoral shifts of 2010 were simply to be expected, reflections of normal tendencies in American electoral politics. The presidential election of 2008 was remarkable for many reasons, and not least because voter turnout surged by 9 million over 2004, especially among groups who are ordinarily underrepresented in the American electorate. Obama bested McCain by 9.5 million votes, a number just under his majority among first-time voters (9.9 million votes). Given what we know about voter behavior, it should have been expected that many of these younger, poorer, and minority voters would not turn out for the mid-term election which necessarily lacked the bold structuring of alternatives of a presidential contest.

POCKETBOOK VOTING

Given the lower intensity of the mid-term, it is also not surprising that the Democrats lost many of the congressional seats they had gained in traditionally Republican areas. Half of the “blue dog” caucus (a group of conservative Democrats) were defeated, and while their absence may make the Democratic Party more coherent and forceful in ideological and policy terms, these losses also upended the Democratic majority in the House.

As has been common since the New Deal, people voted their “pocketbook.” This means simply that the most important issues to voters assessing the record of incumbents were not the charges and promises of the campaigners, but the issues people actually could assess: unemployment levels and foreclosures in their communities, and changes in their own personal income. In this regard, Barack Obama and the Democratic Party were perhaps unfortunate. As Hendrik Hertzberg pointed out in the *New Yorker*, breezy comparisons between Obama and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were too facile because the timing was off. FDR ran and won in 1932, three years into the Great Depression, when unemployment had risen to 25 percent. By contrast, Obama and the Democrats’ victory occurred earlier in the cycle when the economic crisis was cresting, and

unemployment and hardship were only beginning to rise. In this sense, pocketbook voting meant: that the better comparison is between Obama and Hoover, not FDR.

However, the election of 2010 was not simply normal. The Democratic pummeling was worse than earlier trends would have suggested. In October, writing in the *Boston Review*, Harvard’s Stephen Ansolobehere predicted that the Democrats would lose 25 to 30 House seats. They lost 60, along with six seats in the Senate. The reason may lie in a relatively modest re-composition of the electorate with large

state. The rise of pocketbook or economic voting in the 20th century is in a way an improvement over partisan preferences shaped by habit or by ethnic, or sectional or racial appeals, or by nationalism, for example, if only because people are less susceptible to propaganda on matters with which they have actual experience such as jobs and income. Still, pocketbook voting falls short of the democratic ideal that voters should monitor the actions of the leaders they elect, and punish or reward them at the polls, an ideal that moved the radical democrats of the revolutionary era even to oppose the creation of a national govern-

not hostile to unions on general principle. But while Democrats certainly have been kinder to unions and workers than have Republicans, they have never been willing to spend political capital on the big labor issues, particularly labor law reform.

While labor has been right to work for the election of Democrats, it is a mistake to think that the main way that unions can exert electoral influence is through campaign work or lobbying. A social movement can have enormous influence on elected politicians, particularly when those politicians need the voters who are its constituency. Movements raise issues that politicians avoid just because they are divisive, and movements can use dramatic and disruptive tactics to force those issues onto the electoral agenda. The polarizing results threaten politicians who depend on welding together majorities, forcing them to make policy concessions that would otherwise be resisted. This dynamic is more effective when the political leaders who are targeted share a constituency with the movement, and failure to make concessions will mean a loss of future electoral support. In other words, movements are more likely to expand the range of what is possible when they attack their party allies than when the opposition party is in power.

LEADING EDGE

Fred Block of the University of California at Davis has suggested that labor demand a huge new commitment to green infrastructure development. Some of the building blocks for such a program are already in place, as a consequence of new construction of wind farms, solar factories and electric cars that the stimulus made possible. What if unions used their treasuries and their connections to workers to organize wave upon wave of noisy, rowdy demonstrations to demand such action? Workers and students in France and Britain have set a good example, but those protestors don’t have the advantage of governing regimes that depend on union support for electoral success.

What if unions took the lead in a defiant movement to resist foreclosures? After all, many of the people losing their homes are workers and union members. Why is it left to Marcy Kaptur, the congresswoman from Ohio, to urge people facing foreclosure to stay in their homes, because the banks don’t have valid paperwork. Isn’t that a role for union organizers?

Franklin Delano Roosevelt won the election of 1932 because significant numbers of working-class voters shifted to Democratic columns. But after taking office in the spring of 1933 he did little for workers or for their growing demand for the right to organize. Votes were not enough to lead the administration to antagonize business by putting teeth into the series of unenforceable legislative proclamations with which the Democrats tried to appease their working-class base. Only as the strike movement escalated with general strikes in 1934 and 1935 did FDR agree to throw his support behind the National Labor Relations Act. And only as the strike movement spread through the rubber, auto and steel industries did the Supreme Court declare the NLRA constitutional.

The main lesson to be taken from the New Deal is that the politicians we elect need to have movements at their back before they make good on their campaign promises to working people.



Anti-foreclosure activists stand outside the house of Rosemary Williams, a Minneapolis woman who refused to leave her foreclosed home during the summer of 2009.

consequences. In particular, the 2010 midterm saw a significant increase in voters older than 65 over the previous midterm, and a shift in the partisanship of those voters to the Republican party. This development was almost certainly tied to the Tea Party movement, probably both as cause and effect.

One of the Tea Party rallying cries was, after all, “Take Our Country Back!” It seems a reasonable surmise that many older, white, and economically more comfortable voters were reacting to a sense that they were losing the country and the world they knew, a loss symbolized by the election of an African American as president, by the darkening of the US population, as well as by changing sexual and family mores, and maybe by signs of America’s diminished standing in the world. Such reactive movements are hardly new to American politics, but the drama of recent changes may enlarge the pool of people susceptible to reactive appeals.

There are other factors that contributed to the rise of the Tea Party, of course, not least that the movement received huge support from right-wing businessmen and some Republican operatives. Discontent among white, comfortable, and older voters created a constituency susceptible to Tea Party appeals, and the Tea Party in turn helped to shape the partisan and programmatic forms in which those discontents would be expressed.

The other important factor in the midterm results has to do with the relationship between voting decisions and the modern

ment because it would be so removed from their surveillance. The idea of the people holding government accountable for what it does has long proved quixotic, but as government becomes more complex and bureaucratic, the idea becomes more quixotic still. Can voters really monitor the Federal Reserve, or the GM and bank bailouts, or the complex pathways of the stimulus or the bulky health care legislation or the new financial regulations?

No, they can’t, I can’t, and you can’t. Instead we rely on politicians to exercise surveillance over each other and offer contending explanations of the issues. Which politicians? Well, no one better than the president himself, as FDR demonstrated in his famed fireside chats. In this regard, whatever you think of Obama’s policies (I myself think that under the circumstances he did pretty well), he failed. In the absence of clear ideological and programmatic leadership from the President, the awesome propaganda that unlimited amounts of money could buy his opponents became that much more effective.

ELECTIONEERING

So what should we do now? What specifically should unions like ours do? Since the mid-twentieth century, unions have been allied with the Democratic Party, contributing money to campaigns and playing an increasingly central role in “get out the vote” drives and electioneering. Unions’ support for Democrats has escalated in recent years, as they sought action on labor law reform and as it became harder to find Republicans who were

Labor’s power & social movements



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Stop cuts to community colleges

CUNY community colleges face a serious threat of a midyear cut in City funding – but you can take action to help stop it.

The mayor has not yet announced the size of the final budget reductions, but his target number is a 5.4% budget cut or \$13 million from community colleges this year. CUNY community colleges are now going through

a so-called “budget exercise” to plan for the midyear cuts.

The PSC’s community college chapters have launched a petition campaign against this midyear cut, to preserve CUNY’s ability to serve its students. Sign on to the petition at psc-cuny.org, or e-mail John Gergely (jgergely@psccmail.org) for materials to circulate at your campus.

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Budget cuts chip away at CUNY

By JOHN TARLETON

CUNY campuses are feeling the sting from budget cuts – both State budget cuts enacted this summer, and midyear cuts and set-asides now underway at both State and City levels. PSC activists are organizing to stop further cuts, and to press colleges to make choices that do the least harm to faculty, staff and students.

State aid to CUNY’s senior colleges was reduced by \$84.4 million in this year’s budget. As a result, CUNY reduced senior college allocations by 2.5%, and colleges have been told to put aside another 1.25% as a reserve against midyear cuts in State support. In the last two years, CUNY senior colleges have already lost \$205 million in State funding.

At the community colleges, State base aid was slashed by \$285 per full-time equivalent student (FTE) in this year’s budget, for a total loss of \$485 per FTE in the past two years. While the PSC and allies won \$21.4 million in increased operating aid from the City Council for CUNY community colleges in June – a significant achievement in this budget climate – the union is now fighting Mayor Bloomberg’s plan for a midyear reduction (see “15-Minute Activist,” above).

VARIED IMPACT

The impact of the reductions varies, depending on a college’s enrollment patterns, vendor contracts, financial reserves, etc. But PSC chapter leaders on almost every campus say they are seeing an effect, and they are asking administrators for hard information on planned cuts and revenue sources.

John Jay has been particularly hard hit. In a September 21 memo, President Jeremy Travis announced 15% cuts in non-personnel spending and in the budget for college assistants. No searches for new faculty will be carried out this year, he said, and 44 full-time administrative positions will remain vacant. “We are in a period of great fiscal constraint,” Travis wrote.

Adjunct cutbacks, class size boosts looming



PSC Chapter Chair Joyce Moorman (second row, on left) and union activists at BMCC have joined other faculty voices in urging the college administration to find alternatives to eliminating 261 sections next semester.

At Baruch, the English Department has been told to come up with about a quarter of a million dollars in savings, said PSC Chapter Chair Peter Hitchcock. “The dean has suggested turning our ‘Great Works’ literature course into 15 jumbo classes of 114 students each, with no discussion sections or graders,” he said. According to the dean, Baruch could cut 25 adjuncts as the result of this consolidation.

“It’s outrageous, and we need to look for alternatives,” Hitchcock said. “You need discussion sections to teach literature. That course had 56 sections this Fall.”

“We need to reduce the total number of sections and increase section size wherever possible,” a Brooklyn College dean wrote to department chairs in mid-November. Class size minimums have been raised from 10 to 18, PSC Chapter Chair Scott Dexter told *Clarion*. “They are moving from small, intimate classes to bigger classes,” he said. “It’s a new discourse.” Reports from various department chairs and other faculty point to cuts in the part-time instructional budgets and non-personnel expenses, Dexter said PSC

chapters have begun organizing at their colleges to demand that the administration take decisions that do the least harm to faculty, staff and students. At BMCC, Joyce Moorman, associate professor of music and art, learned at her October 13 department meeting that there would be cuts in funding for work-study students and college assistants on top of previous cuts to the non-personnel budget. She was told that cuts in the adjunct budget loomed as well, that 261 sections were to be eliminated college-wide, and that maximum class size would be increased by three students in several large departments.

Moorman, who is also the PSC chapter chair, sent out an e-mail that night to other union activists inquiring if they had anything similar at their departmental meetings that day. She learned that the English, social science and math departments were also discussing adjunct cutbacks.

PSC activists, department chairs and other faculty members argued strongly that eliminating sections would be a poor decision. At a subsequent labor-management meet-

ing, Moorman and members of the local union executive committee pressed the administration for more information. They were told that the cuts were real – but that the administration was now looking at an alternative plan to increase enrollment by 1,000 students and run classes later into the night, which would require an OK from CUNY central administration.

The 261 sections were not available when student registration for Spring semester began in November, but that could change: BMCC’s plan to address the cuts will be finalized after the size of the midyear community college cuts is decided (see “15-Minute-Activist,” above).

INFORMATION

At a November 9 meeting of chapter chairs, PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant emphasized the importance of union chapters’ using labor-management meetings to obtain information about budget cuts and available revenues. That’s the first step, he said, in mobilizing members to fight for their interests.

“We can’t do this without labor-management meetings,” Fabricant said. “And they need to happen fast.”

In addition to tuition and State and City funds, college administrators have access to other revenue sources that include vendor contracts for food services or campus bookstores, and funds from the CUNY Research Foundation and individual college foundations. “Right now colleges are cutting at the margins. Redirecting discretionary funds to academic instruction may help save courses and keep class size down,” said PSC First Vice President Steve London. “It’s extremely important that chapters be engaged in examining the budget process on their campus, because campuses have some autonomy on how they expend their funds.”

For example, London said, if adjunct budgets or class size are management’s first target, “we need to look at what other resources may be available to use instead.”

PSC President Barbara Bowen says the union has a critical role to play. “Others may defend the terms and conditions for their department or their program,” said Bowen. “It is the union’s unique role to defend the terms and conditions of all. The union is our collective voice, and that makes it stronger than any one of us alone.”

Next year

The conventional wisdom these days is that budget cuts are inevitable – but CUNY’s budget request for next year calls for increased funding from both City and State.

CUNY’s proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2012 calls for a 9% increase in State support and a 4.6% rise in City funding, and includes the creation of 275 new full-time lines. While the union and CUNY differ on some elements in the spending plan, such as its reliance on increased tuition, the PSC supports the University’s call for increased public investment in the CUNY system.

“I think it’s significant that CUNY has made this request in these economic times,” said PSC First Vice President Steve London. “New funds won’t be easy to win – but support for public higher education is a smart move that is vital to strengthening our economy.” – JT