

Clarion

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



OCTOBER 2012



NOVEMBER
Obama vs. Romney on higher ed

The candidates' stands on the federal role.

PAGE 7



Pat Arnow

AGAINST INTIMIDATION FACULTY STAND UP

When college faculty want to spend more time teaching their students, most people would praise them. But when the English department at Queensborough Community College voted not to cut composition classes from four hours to three, the QCC administration had a different reaction: it threatened to fire most of the department's faculty. The three-hour cap is called for under Path-

ways, CUNY's overhaul of general education, but the attempt at intimidation backfired: QCC's English department refused to back down, and faculty across CUNY rallied to their side. Opposition to Pathways now appears stronger than it was before. Above, English department chairs from across CUNY discuss how to support their colleagues.

PAGES 2 - 4

STRATEGY

Political action and the PSC

Inside and outside strategies, social movements and election campaigns, long-term and short-term perspectives. How does the PSC put it all together? **PAGE 10**

AT THE TABLE

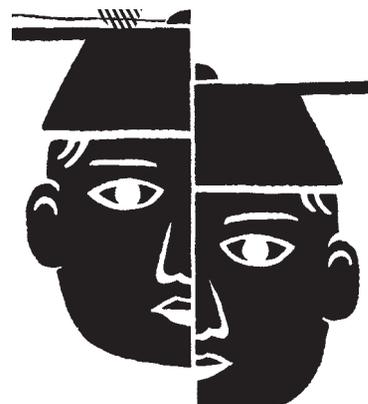
RF employees seek new pact

Bargaining has begun for a new union contract at the Central Office of the CUNY Research Foundation. Meet the new negotiators. **PAGE 12**

AUSTERITY

Pathways: the real agenda

What does the Gates Foundation have to do with CUNY's Pathways initiative? More than you might think. The national context for a local conflict. **PAGE 11**



ADJUNCTS

Late paychecks repeat at York

CUNY adjuncts are accustomed to being economically precarious – but at York College this semester, things have taken a turn for the worse. **PAGE 5**



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006.
E-MAIL: PHOGNESS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: (212) 302-7815.

Vote on the WFP ballot line

● If you are a New Yorker who supports Barack Obama, you have a choice in how you vote for him: you vote for Obama on either the Democratic Party or the Working Families Party (WFP) lines. I urge you to carefully consider recording your vote for Obama on Row D, the WFP's line.

Since its founding in 1998, the WFP has steadily increased its vote. In 2010, WFP voters accounted for more than 4% of total turnout in New York State. In New York City, the WFP emerged as the third largest party, with a vote total equal to 42% of that of the Republican Party.

The WFP has only elected a few candidates running solely on its line, including New York City Councilmember Letitia James. But when it endorses a Democrat, its vote total provides a way to show a candidate that progressive voters can make the difference between victory and defeat. The WFP influences the selection of Democratic candidates both by endorsing the most pro-labor candidates in primary contests, and by retaining the option to run candidates in its own name.

The WFP can proudly take much of the credit for convincing the State Legislature to raise New York's minimum wage, and it is currently spearheading the battle to require employers in New York City to provide paid sick leave to their employees.

So, on November 6, please consider joining other progressives in voting for Barack Obama and the other Working Families Party candidates on Row D.

Gerald Meyer
Hostos Community College

Editor's note: The PSC Delegate Assembly voted to affiliate with the Working Families Party in Fall 2011, joining the WFP's 25 other union affiliates. See page 12 for more info.

Pathways should be retired

● As retired college administrators, teachers and scholars, we regard with dismay the Pathways initiative launched by CUNY's central administration and pushed forward against the best advice of the academic community.

We devoted our working lives at CUNY to the task of improving the quality and accessibility of higher education for the working people of this city, a task to which the University itself made a commitment at its founding more than a century and a half ago. In retirement we have not abandoned that commitment.

Pathways ignores our own experience. It denies the best scholarship. It defies established patterns of governance in matters of curriculum. We cannot accept the disingenuous pedagogical, bureaucratic and cost-saving arguments advanced for its implementation.

What we see is the constriction and dumbing-down of the curriculum available to a population most in need of expanded educational opportunity and a population most likely to repay public investment in liberal education many times over. What we see is a cynical attempt to use contrived austerity as the excuse to tier educational opportunity, relegating many to a cut-rate, get-through-quick experience.

We join with our colleagues in urging the CUNY administration to order a moratorium on the imple-

mentation of the Pathways project and to entertain alternatives better designed to provide both a rich and readily navigated road to a college degree.

Jim Perlstein, Chair
PSC Retiree Chapter
and the chapter's entire Executive Committee

Keep an eye on City Council redistricting

● The New York City Districting Commission's proposal for future Council districts would destroy the historical integrity of my Manhattan Valley neighborhood, which is attached to East Harlem and the South Bronx. This is very bad news for mixed-income communities of color – the few of us left in Manhattan.

The Commission's plan breaks up a district that was originally created for Latino empowerment, currently represented by Melissa Mark-Viverito. The proposal dissects Manhattan Valley, which lies between 96th and 110th Streets. It would attach the lower half to the district below and the upper to a new district that includes my alma mater, Columbia University. The timing is of note: we are undergoing another intense gentrification phase, this time led by investment capital. At the same time, Columbia's development of a new campus above 125th Street and Broadway is displacing local businesses and residents.

Manhattan Valley has an organized housing network that goes back to the community struggles of the 1960s and '70s. We've been fighting this trend for 30 years. Westsiders for Responsible Development and other local groups were recently successful in curtailing high-rise development in the area – maybe we're being punished for our success.

There was a large and vocal turnout at the October 4 public hearing at the Schomburg Center. We all need to pay attention to the NYC Districting Commission: these hearings are about political power.

Blanca Vázquez
Hunter College
and Co-Chair, Manhattan Valley Preservation Coalition

Style triumphs over substance in Denver debate

● As a Democrat by virtue of genetics...I have to accept that Willard "Mitt" Romney "won" the first 2012 Presidential Debate.

It is of little relevance that Mitt won on style, not substance. His presentation – woven from synthetics, wrought with innuendos, half-truths and fiction – does not affect people with firm views on either side of the issues. What Romney's win does is to nudge undecided voters off the fence to Mitt's side. Let's

face it: after 45 months of watching President Barack Obama function and Washington's dysfunction, if one still has not decided for whom one will vote, it very well might be style over substance that sways you.

In an ideal debate, logic, facts and deductive reasoning are all that matter. For the target audience in a presidential debate, style may be what counts.

Thank the Lord for the recent 7.8% unemployment report, now back below 8%. That is substance that cannot be overlooked or spun to yield anything but a win for President Obama and the tremendous work he has done for 45 months, and for which he needs another 51 months to continue.

Ainsley Allen
York College

Political activism one door knock at a time

● The first weekend in October, I walked through the streets of Western Massachusetts with five other New Yorkers. We had not come just to view the meandering branches decked in red and orange foliage, but to save the Senate from turning red. Not red like the beautiful leaves we walked by, but Republican red – not so beautiful!

Bundled up with our "Elizabeth Warren for US Senate" T-shirts over warm sweatshirts, we shared our enthusiasm for this progressive and capable leader with the people behind the doors we knocked on. Some welcoming, others not so much. Some conversations are priceless: there's serendipity at many a doorstep.

The addresses we targeted were mostly homes of independents and Democrats who often don't bother voting. Our aim was to identify those who were for Warren, or undecided, with the latter to get follow-up visits. This will enable tightly focused work the last week to get Warren supporters out to vote.

Polls show voters evenly split between Warren and Republican Scott Brown. The vision of a right-wing Republican takeover of the entire Congress is great motivation to travel to Springfield and lose some weight walking the streets. If you'd like to help, you can get in touch with me at ageiger3@nyc.rr.com for information on free transportation and housing.

Arlene Geiger
John Jay College

Editor's note: The PSC is organizing phone-banking to union voters in battleground states and key Congressional contests, including the Elizabeth Warren campaign, as well as some bus trips to campaign on "labor walks" out of state. For more information, contact Amanda Magalhaes in the PSC office (amagalhaes@pscmail.org or 212-354-1252).

'We will not stand for threats and coercion'

The following resolution on Pathways and academic freedom was passed unanimously by the PSC Delegate Assembly on September 27.

The PSC reaffirms the call we issued in April 2012, for the repeal of Pathways, a revision of the general education curriculum of the entire University that will degrade the quality of education at CUNY.

As a union, we stand for academic quality and for the principle that CUNY students, who are overwhelmingly working class and people of color, are entitled to the opportunity to receive an education that will take them as far as their abilities and aspirations allow.

Now that implementation has begun, the irrationality and academic hollowness of Pathways has become even clearer. Unable to demonstrate that Pathways has academic integrity, CUNY college administrations have resorted to threats and coercion in an attempt to gain faculty approval for its courses.

We express our solidarity with our colleagues across the University who have taken a stand against the dilution of our students' education and who have insisted on sufficient instructional time with their students. Threatening faculty with punishment for voting to spend more time in instruction is absurd, but this is exactly what was threatened at Queensborough Community College last month, and what continues to be threatened less overtly at other CUNY colleges.

Legitimate academic decisions cannot be made in an atmosphere of threats, coercion and reprisals. Such an atmosphere is antithetical to the nature of a university.

As members of an academic community, as members of a union, as instructional staff whose contract includes the protection of academic freedom – we will not stand for the use of threats and coercion.

The PSC reiterates our resolution demanding the repeal of the Pathways policy itself and calls for an immediate moratorium on all further implementation of Pathways until the CUNY Central Administration explicitly withdraws all forms of coercion and pressure – including explicit or implicit threats of reprisals and dismissals – directed at faculty, staff, departments and other governance bodies.

Write to Clarion

Letters may be on any topic, but should be less than 200 words and are subject to editing. E-mail your letter to Clarion editor Peter Hogness (phogness@pscmail.org) or fax it to 212-302-7815.

Getting ready for retirement



More than 215 PSC members attended the union's annual pre-retirement conference September 21, at the Grad Center. The conference is for members five years or less from retiring. (Above) A PSC member speaks during a breakout session on pensions.

Queensboro confrontation

By PETER HOGNESS

A conflict between English department faculty and the administration at Queensborough Community College (QCC) in September has grown into a University-wide issue, sparking a new level of resistance by CUNY faculty to the administration's Pathways initiative.

Pathways, an administration-driven overhaul of CUNY's rules on general education and transfer, imposes a lower limit for the total number of credits that colleges can require in general education. (See psc-cuny.org/what-pathways for more details.) Pathways has been strongly opposed by the PSC, the University Faculty Senate, and other elected faculty bodies at CUNY, who say that it would diminish the quality of students' education.

The confrontation at QCC began on September 12 when, despite administration pressure, the English department voted not to approve new Pathways-compliant courses for freshman composition, which would have reduced classroom hours from four to three per week.

FOUR HOURS

At QCC, as at most CUNY colleges, composition courses receive three credits but meet for four hours per week. "Having four hours in class is very important, especially for our students at QCC," said Susan Jacobowitz, an associate professor of English. "Many are non-native speakers of English, many are coming in through remediation. If we reduce the time we spend on instruction by 25%, many of our students will struggle when they otherwise would have succeeded."

Jacobowitz's colleagues agreed, and by a more than two-to-one margin, they voted down the three-hour, three-credit proposal. The QCC administration responded with a blunt threat. "That decision has serious repercussions for the College and the department," Vice President Karen Steele wrote the next day in an e-mail to the department chair. "Since we don't have in place courses that will meet the Pathways requirements for the Common Core, we can't put forward a Fall 2013 schedule that includes English composition courses." Therefore, she wrote, "we will have to take the following actions:

- All searches for full-time faculty in the English department will be cancelled immediately...;
- of necessity, all adjunct faculty in the English department will be sent letters of non-reappointment for Fall 2013; and
- the reappointment of full-time faculty in the English Department will be subject to ability to pay and Fall '13 enrollment in department courses."

QCC students would be advised to take composition at another CUNY college, Steele added. (Full text at tinyurl.com/QCC-threat.)

CUNY-wide Pathways conflict



Anne Friedman, PSC Vice President for Community Colleges, and Craig Bernardini, Chair of the Hostos English Department.

It was a heavy-handed move, and it backfired: the effect of Steele's threats was to stir up stronger opposition to Pathways than ever before.

The PSC responded to this threat to its members' jobs with a statement the next day. The union said it was "outrageous" that faculty members would be threatened with reprisals for voting according to their professional judgment on a matter of curriculum. "The vice president's extraordinary retaliation threatens the most basic understandings of both academic freedom and faculty authority," the union said. "Every faculty member should know that the union is here to defend your rights," it added, noting that the PSC was prepared to take legal action if necessary.

"There is no reason for the administration to eliminate English composition courses, or any other courses, that do not comply with Pathways," the union emphasized. "They will still fulfill the college's degree requirements. Such courses could still transfer to other colleges for credit outside the general education curriculum." Eliminating all composition courses was not only unnecessary, the PSC said, it could violate State Education Department regulations and jeopardize QCC's accreditation.

DISCIPLINE COUNCIL

A couple of days later, CUNY's English Discipline Council (EDC), made up of chairs and representatives from English departments across the University, spoke out in solidarity with their colleagues. "The English department faculty's understanding of student needs should be respected at Queensborough and at all the CUNY colleges," the EDC wrote to Alexandra Logue, CUNY's Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost. "We write to condemn the Queensborough Community College Administration's violation of faculty governance and call for an unequivocal



Anne Friedman, PSC Vice President for Community Colleges, and Craig Bernardini, Chair of the Hostos English Department.

reversal of all threats against its faculty and students." (See page 4 for full text.)

The University Faculty Senate (UFS) also weighed in with a statement by its Executive Committee. "Unfortunately the situation at Queensborough, while more public, is not unique," UFS leaders observed. "At other campuses threats and intimidation with regard to Pathways have also taken place." QCC's English faculty were "making an academic judgment that they are uniquely qualified to make," the UFS emphasized. Responding to

intellectual disagreement with raw threats is an "abuse of authority," it concluded, and must be rejected (see page 4). And the American Association of University Professors warned Chancellor Matthew Goldstein that an "inhospitable climate for academic freedom" must not be allowed to develop at QCC.

In response to the storm of protest, the QCC administration beat a partial retreat. In a campus-wide e-mail on September 16, the college's interim president, Diane Call, set a different tone. "The potential consequences as described in Vice President Steele's e-mail illustrate the worst case scenario – one we are prepared to work mightily to avoid," she wrote. Call's e-mail did not quiet the growing protests, however, and on September 18, Steele issued a public apology.

Faculty leaders welcomed the change in tone. "An apology, however, is not a retraction," the PSC emphasized on September 18 (see page 4). "Damage has already been done," it continued. "At a minimum, it is time for a moratorium on implementation of Pathways, to allow academic freedom and open deliberation at CUNY to be repaired. The PSC calls on the CUNY administration to suspend all implementation of Pathways until at least the end of the current semester, so that this important curriculum change can

receive the free and open consideration it deserves." (Full text on page 4.)

The controversy burst into the news media, with headlines like "College English Dept. Fights Class-Time Cuts," and "Teachers Fight New CUNY Program." There was coverage in *The New York Times*, the *Daily News*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, public radio, and more. The clear position taken by QCC English faculty – that they would not agree to spend less time with their students, even in the face of threats – attracted reporters' attention and the sympathy of the public.

"It's hard to understand how teaching less English, less math, less science and less foreign languages could be good for students," David Humphries, the department's deputy chair, told *The New York Times*. "Under the guise of streamlining transferability we're actually watering down the students' education."

CUNY's conflict over Pathways had "reached a boiling point," WNYC host Brian Lehrer told listeners. His guest, Scott Jaschik of *Inside Higher Ed*, said that even some supporters of Pathways had been "very disturbed" by the administration's response. On-air discussion touched on a point that the PSC raised in its September 18 statement: "The resort to threats exposes the fear that the Pathways curriculum would not be approved without them."

The effect on those curriculum votes was where management may have made its biggest miscalculation. The confrontation at Queensborough appeared to have left faculty more, not less, willing to vote down Pathways-compliant courses.

UNITED

At the behest of QCC's administration, the college's English department met again the week after its initial vote – and did not change its position. The same week, the English department at LaGuardia Community College rejected a proposal for three-hour composition classes, and voted to stand by the four-hour course plan it had followed for years. It reaffirmed that stance in a near-unanimous vote on October 10, despite severe pressure from LaGuardia's administration. Bronx Community College's (BCC) English department continued to resist pressure to change the four-hour composition course approved by BCC's curriculum committee in April, with the backing of BCC's Faculty Council.

English departments at Borough of Manhattan Community College and Hostos Community College, do not have this fourth hour of instruction for composition – but BMCC is now seeking it.

"We need that time with our students as well," said Craig Bernardini, chair of the Hostos English department, who emphasized the

issue when he stood for election as department chair.

Dozens of faculty from English departments at CUNY community colleges attended an emergency meeting at the PSC on October 3, to discuss a collective response to the threats they have received from management. Union leaders reiterated the PSC's commitment to defend members from retaliation and outlined the contractual and legal basis for the faculty's right to exercise their academic judgment in voting on curriculum matters. It was very much a working meeting, with colleagues from different colleges sharing information and comparing notes on their administrations' tactics. "I was inspired by the commitment of both senior and junior colleagues to resist administration threats and pressures, and to maintain a united stand," Anne Friedman, PSC vice president for community colleges, said afterwards.

PRESSURE

English faculty from several community colleges said they had been pressured to accept a "deal," in which they would get four hours' workload credit for teaching a three-hour composition class with an additional "conference hour." But student attendance in that fourth hour would not be mandatory, and faculty would not be allowed to meet with the entire class at once. "In other words, it would not be a classroom hour," said QCC's Jacobowitz. "And a fourth classroom hour with all our students – not just some of them – is what we need." She noted that senior college English departments were being allowed to continue with four-hour composition classes. "So our students, many of whom need this instruction more, will be given less," Jacobowitz said. "It makes no sense."

Others said they had been assured that the proposed three-hour composition classes would have fewer students, to compensate for the reduction in class time. But they noted that unless such limits were negotiated through the union and incorporated into the collective bargaining agreement, they would be unenforceable. "Next year will come and they'll tell you, 'Oh, our budget's been cut, so we have to raise your class size. We have no choice.' If it's not in the contract, what are you going to do?" said one participant.

MORATORIUM

When QCC's Academic Senate, which includes both faculty and administration representatives, met on October 10, it approved two resolutions that gave further support to its English department's stand. The first affirmed that QCC must continue to offer the courses required for its degree programs – a stance that would prevent the college from dropping its composition courses. The second declared a moratorium on review of Pathways-compliant courses until the QCC administration's earlier threats are formally retracted, and the administration affirms in writing "that the academic judgment and academic freedom of the faculty will be upheld without reprisal."

PSC calls for time-out on Pathways

Below is the PSC's September 18 update on the reprisals that Queensborough Community College Vice President Karen Steele announced after the English Department voted "no" on three-hour, three-credit composition courses for Pathways.

The response to Queensborough Community College Vice President Karen B. Steele's announcement of sweeping reprisals against the QCC English Department following its rejection of proposed curriculum changes for Pathways has been swift, intense and national. Condemnation has come not only from the PSC, but also from CUNY's English Discipline Council, from other English department faculty and from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

SHIFT IN TONE

On September 16, Queensborough Community College President Diane B. Call responded with a shift in position and tone. In a message to the entire College faculty she wrote that Vice President Steele's memo illustrated "the worst case scenario – one we are prepared to work mightily to avoid." And one day later, on September 17, Vice President Steele herself wrote to the English Department: "I deeply regret having sent the original

'Reset' needed on discussion

e-mail, primarily because it was needlessly hurtful to members of the English Department and to other faculty as well. It was an e-mail sent in haste, out of an over-dramatized fear of the possible impact on the department."

On behalf of the CUNY faculty and staff, the PSC leadership thanks Vice President Steele for her public apology, and recognizes that the QCC administration has changed its position in response to the outcry the original position provoked. Faculty at Queensborough Community College are especially grateful for Vice President Steele's willingness to apologize in public.

Given these developments, the union will hold in abeyance its filing of a legal charge of retaliation at the Public Employment Relations Board while we continue to monitor the University's actions.

An apology, however, is not a retraction. Neither President Call's message nor Vice President Steele's explicitly retracts the possibility that they will implement the reprisals threatened in Steele's initial memo. Vice President Steele writes: "I would like to make clear that the items listed in the e-mail were hypotheti-

cal, and there are no plans to enact them." [Boldface in original.] This comment, together with President Call's description of the reprisals as a "worst case scenario," leaves open the possibility that the reprisals could still be enacted in response to some

undefined action. The possibility that the QCC administration will take the actions originally listed by Vice President Steele has not been removed.

The Queensborough administration's apology and withdrawal of the immediate threat of reprisals are important, but damage has already been done. Faculty at Queensborough have now heard that their reappointment is potentially connected to their vote on curriculum. That message is not easily forgotten. And the explicit threats at Queensborough echo more subtle threats that have been made at other campuses, as administrators communicate to department chairs and faculty members about the consequences of their votes on Pathways curriculum.

The atmosphere of intimidation that now surrounds faculty votes on Pathways curriculum is antithetical to a university. The way for the CUNY ad-

ministration to change it is to issue an unambiguous message that it respects the faculty's right to vote on matters of curriculum – free from intimidation – according to their judgment of the best interests of their students and the standards of their profession.

IMPOSED

The Pathways resolution was imposed on the University without participation by elected faculty governance. While QCC's shift of position and public apology are important, the resort to threats exposes the fear that the Pathways curriculum would not be approved without them. At a minimum, it is time for a moratorium on implementation of Pathways to allow academic freedom and open deliberation at CUNY to be repaired. The PSC calls on the CUNY administration to suspend all implementation of Pathways until at least the end of the current semester so that this important curriculum change can receive the free and open consideration it deserves.

The PSC's initial statement on QCC's threatened reprisals is online at psc-cuny.org/our-campaigns/psc-response-pathways-reprisals. The September 27 resolution by the union's Delegate Assembly is on page 2.

UFS on faculty rights

The following statement was adopted unanimously by the University Faculty Senate's Executive Committee on September 18.

The UFS Executive Committee strongly deplores the recent actions of the Queensborough Community College administration and other instances of intimidation at CUNY colleges in regard to Pathways.

The English Department at Queensborough Community College voted last week to retain in its Composition Course a single extra hour of instruction, which had proved necessary over the years to provide their students, many of whom are ESL speakers, with adequate preparation in writing. This vote ran afoul of a mandate from the central office of CUNY, which was never convincingly explained and never approved by the Trustees. The mandate said that every CUNY course must be only three hours long, be it a science lab, a language course, or a writing course, where affording students a little extra time for experiment or practice had been routine. This was one of many Pathways mandates gutting curricular quality that have been inflicted on the campuses without consultation with the appropriate elected faculty, or with the faculty who are actually teaching CUNY's diverse students.

LIGHTNING BOLTS

The Queensborough Provost Diane Call responded to this single faculty vote with threats of shutting down the department, firing the faculty and dropping English Composition from the curriculum. Such lightning bolts have no place in universities, which by long agreement value cooperative, respectful and deliberate decision-making. The faculty were carrying out the official duty for which they were hired, participating in valid shared governance and making an academic judgment that they are uniquely qualified to make.

In no one's memory has such a rash and incomprehensible public action been taken by any official at CUNY. It was in the worst tradition of managerial bullying and the abuse of authority, and it undermines everything that is sacred at universities. Unfortunately the situation at Queensborough, while more public, is not unique. At other campuses threats and intimidation with regard to Pathways have also taken place.

CIVIL DIALOGUE

The combined impact of these actions is to create a climate of intimidation that violates the faculty's right to exercise its professional judgment without animus and retaliation at all of CUNY's campuses.

We urge a return to a more civil dialogue informed by the traditions of shared governance, in which the commitment of the faculty to curricular rigor can be freely expressed and never again shut down by force.

CUNY English departments condemn threats at QCC

The following letter was sent by CUNY's English Discipline Council, made up of chairs and department representatives from departments of English across CUNY, on September 16:

Dear Executive Vice Chancellor Alexandra Logue:

We have read Karen Steele's e-mail of 13 September 2012, to the chair of the English Department at Queensborough Community College, in which she outlines the repercussions to the English department if it refuses to overturn its vote against Pathways-compliant 3/3 composition courses. The threatened reprisals include: suspending all job searches; canceling all composition courses in Fall 2013; sending "all adjunct faculty in the English department...letters of non-reappointment for Fall 2013"; and the reconsideration of full-time faculty reappointments. Such threats violate the stated commitment that Pathways be a faculty-driven process, as well as the integrity of the entire University. This is further evidence of the ways in which the Pathways initiative has driven a wedge between faculty and administrators, severely fracturing the academic community. The cancellation of all composition courses for Fall 2013 immediately sabotages students' education and imperils the very reason for Pathways – articulation

agreements and transferability of courses. Furthermore, a college that does not offer composition stands in danger of losing its accreditation. We are particularly galled by the way in which genuine intellectual disagreement is being overridden by intimidation directed at the most vulnerable members of the professoriate – contingent faculty and the untenured.

Interim President Diane Call's e-mail of 16 September 2012 stating, "The potential consequences as described in Vice President Steele's e-mail illustrate the worst case scenario – one we are prepared to work mightily to avoid," does nothing to repair the damage done over her administration's approach to faculty governance. The threat, one which impacts students and contingent faculty most devastatingly, remains a possibility regardless of invitations for further conversation.

The English department faculty's understanding of student needs should be respected at Queensborough and at all the CUNY colleges. In our meeting of September 14, we learned that the majority of senior colleges will maintain a fourth (conference) hour in composition courses while community college administrators are insisting upon three hours. We also compared class sizes and learned that senior colleges have smaller class sizes than community colleges. Pathways is supposed to create equity



Members of the English Discipline Council meet at the Grad Center on Oct. 5.

when, in fact, it will be short changing our most at-risk students.

We write to condemn the Queensborough Community College Administration's violation of faculty governance and call for an unequivocal reversal of all threats against its faculty and students.

Sincerely,
Cristina León Alfar, *Chair, CUNY English Discipline Council*
Chair, Hunter College
Nina Bennett, *Chair, New York City College of Technology*
Craig Bernardini, *Chair, Hostos Community College, CUNY*
Glenn Burger, *Chair, Queens College, CUNY*
Ashley Dawson, *Chair, College of Staten Island, CUNY*
Mario DiGangi, *Executive Officer, CUNY Graduate Center*

Maryann Feola, *Department Representative, College of Staten Island, CUNY*
Eileen Ferretti, *Chair, Kingsborough Community College*
Susan Fischer, *Department Representative, Medgar Evers College, CUNY*
Linda Grasso, *Chair, York College, CUNY*
Sandra Hanson, *Chair, LaGuardia Community College, CUNY*
David Humphries, *Deputy Chair, Queensborough Community College, CUNY*
Renata Kobetts Miller, *Chair, City College, CUNY*
Allison Pease, *Chair, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY*
Marianne Pita, *Chair, Bronx Community College, CUNY*
Ellen Tremper, *Chair, Brooklyn College, CUNY*

Adjunct pay delay slammed

By JOHN TARLETON

CUNY adjuncts are familiar with being economically precarious, but things have taken a turn for the worse this semester at York College.

On September 20, the first senior college pay date, 125 of York's 347 part-time faculty members failed to receive their first paychecks of the semester. When the second payday arrived on October 4, at least 40 adjuncts remained unpaid.

"It's sheer negligence," said York PSC Chapter Chair, Janice Cline. "People have to get paid."

"It's outrageous on so many levels," added an adjunct who went unpaid again on October 4, despite having taught at York for four years. "That it's [affecting] the most vulnerable population is particularly outrageous."

MAKING THE NEWS

York's adjunct paycheck blunder landed in the pages of the *Daily News*, first on September 27 and then again on October 3. The second article featured PSC activists' work on a petition drive that the union organized in response to the paycheck snafus. The petition calls on York President Marcia Keizs to publicly apologize to the college's adjuncts and ensure that such an incident does not happen again. It quickly received more than 200 signatures from both faculty and students.

"A lot of students passing by also signed the petition and were clearly sympathetic about this mistreatment of adjunct faculty," said Shirley Frank, an adjunct who has taught at York since 1999. "I mentioned to one student that some adjunct faculty haven't seen a paycheck since May, and she rolled her eyes as if to say, 'I know how that is!'"

To date, the York administration has been anything but apologetic. "Our employees have been paid on time," insisted Dolores Swirin, York's vice president of institutional advancement, according to the October 3 report in the *Daily News*. This came as a surprise to adjuncts who were still unpaid on the second senior college pay date of October 4.

Swirin maintained that York had met its obligation to employees because it allowed those who had gone unpaid to fill out a special application for an emergency cash "advance" equal to 60% of the gross pay they are owed. But union activists say that many adjuncts did not know of this option, and that adjuncts with tight schedules may not be able to file this application, which must be done at the HR office in person, for several days. Many are owed net pay that is more than the 60% York is willing to provide.

The bottom line, said Cline, is that giving employees their paychecks on time is not optional. "Why should more than a third of our adjuncts have to request a special 'advance,' when it's money they are already owed for work they have

York College under fire



York Chapter Chair Janice Cline (top) and grievance counselor Lorraine Stern (bottom) speak at an October 9 Chapter meeting.

already done?" she asked. And the paycheck delays, Cline added, were entirely avoidable.

DEADLINES

August 8 was the deadline for department chairs to submit Personnel Action Forms (PAFs) for their fall semester adjuncts. Cline says she knows of no department that failed to submit the PAFs in time, including three departments in which significant numbers of adjuncts did not receive their paychecks though PAFs were timely submitted, anywhere from June to early August.

The PAFs were supposed to be reviewed by the Budget Office, the Division of Academic Affairs and then the Human Resources Department. Based on an August 20 e-mail from Executive Director of Human Resources Barbara Manuel to nearly a dozen top officials at York, Cline suspects that there was holdup in the Division of Academic Affairs with processing the forms. In the e-mail, marked "Importance: High," Manuel warned of additional complications: "We have lost both of the full-time employees responsible for processing adjunct appointments and the college assistant working on these appointments has also left our employ." As a result, she indicated it would be

difficult to get all PAFs processed by the August 31 deadline – and that adjuncts for who PAFs were processed after that date would experience a pay delay.

"York could have seen this as a five-alarm fire," Cline said. "But they let this situation happen because adjuncts are not seen as a priority."

After learning of Manuel's concern that Human Resources might not be able to meet the August 31 deadline, Cline spoke with Manuel by phone on August 22, and urged that the college hire temporary workers or bring in workers from other departments to help speed up the backlog – but no such action was taken.

The PSC's grievance counselor at York, Lorraine Stern, is also a professor of accounting and finance at the college and a certified accountant. "If I was auditing our school and saw how poorly things were run, I would say there was a management failure at the highest level," commented Stern.

'FED UP'

Stern said that as a grievance counselor, she has seen similar failures at York on other issues. "It's a management problem," she told *Clarion*. "People are fed up here

because things don't run smoothly." For example, Stern said, York College consistently fails to reimburse faculty on time for their travel expenses and the union has had to file grievances over this problem every year since 2009.

As *Clarion* went to press, Cline said the York chapter leadership planned to press college leaders for answers at a labor-management meeting slated for October 11.

DOUBLE STANDARD

Several York faculty told *Clarion* that the college administration's sloppy handling of adjunct paychecks stands in stark contrast to its strict insistence that faculty post grades on time at the end of the semester or else receive a reprimand that goes into their personnel file.

Contingent faculty at York are not the only part-timers who have been left without paychecks this semester. According to CLT Chapter Chair Albert Sherman, about 50 adjunct CLTs were not paid in the first pay period of the new semester. There have been problems identified at City Tech, Medgar Evers, Hunter and York, Sherman said, and some adjunct CLTs still had no checks when the second pay period arrived.

"Half of my e-mails are people saying, 'Albert, what do I do?'" said Sherman, who decried CUNY's indifference to its part-time workers. "What if the vice presidents didn't get paid? Would that be accepted? This affects people's lives, and they don't get it."

"I would feel better if somebody would step up and say, 'We're sorry. We made a mistake,'" said an unpaid CLT at City Tech. "It feels like we're getting the runaround."

Problems with paying part-timers have been a recurrent problem at CUNY, one that management often ignores until there are loud

Lack of job security is the underlying issue.

protests from the union (see *Clarion*, March 2009). While some campuses can be worse than others, PSC leaders say that these repeated errors highlight the failings of CUNY's two-tier labor system.

"The underlying issue is the need for adjunct job security," said PSC First Vice President Steve London. "Treating every adjunct as a new employee, even when they have worked at CUNY for years, is not just unfair, it's bad management. When someone is a veteran faculty member – who may well have worked at CUNY longer than their college president – it makes no sense to constantly take them off payroll only to put them back on again." This practice invites unnecessary mistakes and adds up to a lot of wasted effort, he told *Clarion*.

Job security for CUNY adjuncts is first of all a matter of justice, London emphasized, but it's also just the logical thing to do.

York College adjuncts: in their own words

What is it like when you are living paycheck to paycheck and you don't get paid? Adjuncts at York were invited to share their experiences when PSC activists sought signatures on a petition about the late paycheck problem. Here is some of what they said:

SOLE SOURCE OF INCOME

"My current position at York is my sole source of income. We've delayed paying for rent, utilities, food and the additional bills that don't sympathize with 'late' payments. We've dealt with potential late fees causing us to have to borrow from others, and with phone calls to collectors requesting extensions. The meager warning from payroll was insufficient."

INSULTED

"I know that not receiving a check of a few hundred dollars may not be a big deal to some people, such as administrators who get much larger checks – and on time! However, not getting paid has been an embarrassing and uncomfortable situation for me.

Because I didn't receive my first check, I had to ask friends to front me some money. 'What do you mean, they didn't pay you?' they say. 'Why are you still working?' Well paperwork mishaps can happen, I think, and so I rearrange things (including phone bills, utilities, credit card) to be paid on October 4. I make phone calls to try and avoid late fees and interest fees. Come October 4, I find out I won't be paid, either. Now, do I ask my friends again? I eventually found I could go to Human Resources to get 60%, but I didn't know in time. Also, I am insulted I would have to go apply for dollars that I earned and that belong to me in the first place!"

NO PARKING

"A notice informing adjuncts of a new pay date was sent to some and not others; I did not receive it. I immediately had to make alternate arrangements to pay my rent, household bills, and for my gas (that I use to bring me back and forth from Queens). I have not been able to secure a loan for \$175 to cover the cost of parking at York. The security officers at the parking gate are not sympathetic to my plight when I explain that the college hasn't paid me."

CONFLICT

"Not being paid has created conflict between my landlord and me about my rent. I have also had strain in my marriage due to this. There isn't a single area of my life that has not been affected."

– Compiled by John Tarleton

ANALYSIS OF "THE GREAT COST SHIFT"

How higher ed cuts undermine us all

By JOHN QUINTERNO

The completion of postsecondary education has become a minimum requirement for young adults seeking a place in America's middle class. By the late 2000s, the typical person with an associate's degree earned 51% more each year than someone with a high-school diploma, while the average holder of a bachelor's degree earned almost twice as much as a high school graduate. Besides earning more, college graduates are more apt to participate in the labor force, work on a full-time basis and hold jobs that offer important benefits like health insurance.

Higher education enriches not just individuals, but society as a whole. Businesses and the larger economy prosper from access to skilled workers, just as communities reap dividends from the high levels of volunteerism, voting and civic engagement common among graduates. This combination of personal and social benefits is the rationale behind public support for higher education and efforts to boost the share of Americans completing education beyond high school. In the near future, the imperative to invest in higher education will grow more pronounced, given that occupational forecasts suggest that 63% of the jobs that the United States will net by 2018 will require workers with some kind of postsecondary education credential.

MIDDLE CLASS

Americans of all ages have recognized the importance of higher education as a pathway to the middle class, and more people are attending college than in the past. In fall 2010, an estimated 40.5% of young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 – some 12.4 million individuals in total – enrolled in a two-year college or four-year university; 20 years earlier, the enrollment rate was 29.4%. Furthermore, the number of adults older than age 24 enrolled in a college or university rose over the same period, climbing to 7.9 million from 5.8 million. In 2010, approximately 40% of all col-

lege students were older than age 24, with the bulk of these students attending school on a part-time basis.

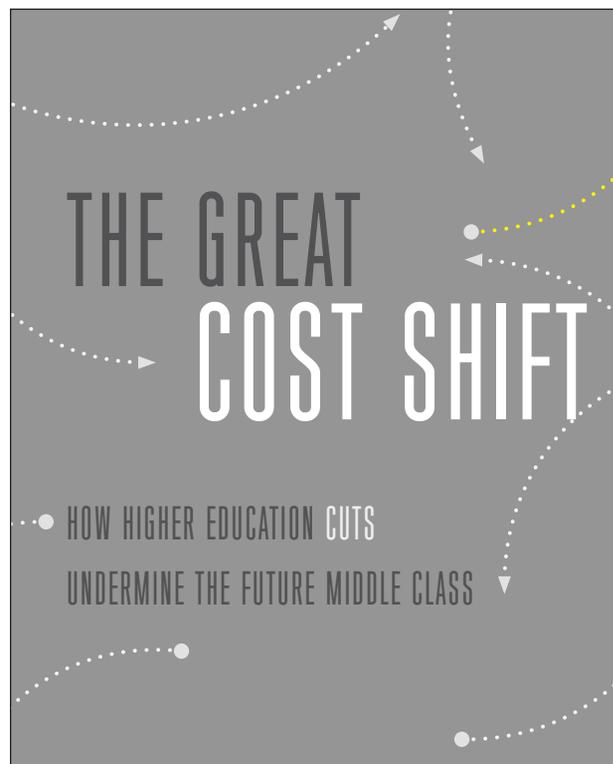
Responsibility for educating the swelling ranks of college students has fallen overwhelmingly to America's 1,000 public two-year colleges and 672 public four-year universities. In fall 2009, public institutions enrolled 76.2% of the nation's undergraduate students. Contrary to popular perception, most public college students do not attend research-intensive flagship campuses but two-year colleges and four-year non-doctoral universities. In fact, nearly half of all public college students in 2009 attended two-year colleges, and another quarter studied at non-doctoral universities.

STATE SPENDING

At the same time that growing numbers of Americans are pursuing higher education in the hope of bettering their lives, state governments – the units of government that traditionally have assumed major responsibility for funding public higher education – are investing less in the institutions educating the bulk of America's college students. Despite appropriating \$75.6 billion for higher education in 2010-2011, states actually devoted less of their wealth to higher education and invested less on various other measures than they did 20 years ago.

It would be comforting to attribute such trends to cyclical economic factors. After all, the United States experienced two recessions during the 2000s, one of which continues to affect state budgets today. Three years after the onset of the Great Recession, total state appropriations for higher education were 5%, or \$4 billion, lower. While temporary federal aid offset much of the decline, total state spending nevertheless fell by 1.5%, even though undergraduate enrollments swelled by 10.3%. Funding per public full-time equivalent (FTE) student is consequently lower now than at any point since 1990-1991.

A review of financial and enrollment data from 1990 onwards suggests that structural change in state support for higher education



is underway. While state spending on higher education increased by \$10.5 billion in absolute terms from 1990 to 2010, in relative terms state funding of higher education declined. Real funding per public FTE dropped by 26.1% from 1990-1991 to 2009-2010. After controlling for inflation, states collectively invested \$6.12 per \$1,000 in personal income in 2010-2011, down from \$8.75 in 1990-1991 – despite the fact that personal income increased by 66.2% over that period.

Over the past 20 years there has been a breakdown in the historical funding pattern of recessionary cuts and expansionary rebounds. The length of time for higher education funding to recover following recessions has lengthened for every downturn since 1979, with early evidence suggesting that the recovery from the Great Recession will be no different.

By investing less, states are effectively shifting costs to students and their families in the form of escalating charges for tuition. This is a change that is transforming the very nature of public higher education. Since 1990, published prices for tuition at public four-year universities have risen by 112.5%. After adjusting for inflation, the real value of tuition and fees at two-year institutions has climbed 71%. Higher prices are particularly troubling in light of the national stagnation of household incomes. In 2010, the median inflation-adjusted annual income among US households was only 2.1% higher than in 1990.

DEBT

A radical reorientation of the financial aid environment has exacerbated the cost pressures. At the federal level, financial aid has shifted from grant-based aid toward loans. In addition, many states have shifted their aid programs from need-based assistance, which tends to benefit low-income students, to merit-based aid, which favors wealthier students. Though merit-based aid remains rare at public two-year colleges, the proportion of students with merit aid at four-year institutions now exceeds the share with

need-based assistance. Rising costs, coupled with declining aid and flat incomes, have led many students, particularly low- and moderate-income ones, to borrow at alarmingly high levels. By the middle of 2011, Americans collectively owed more in outstanding student loan debt than credit card debt. To avoid or minimize indebtedness, many students elect to work long hours and enroll on a part-time basis – seemingly logical actions that actually heighten their odds of never completing a program of study.

In short, states have disinvested in public higher education over the past two decades and, in the process, have shifted costs to students and their families. At the same time that postsecondary education has become a critical pathway into the middle class, increasing num-

bers of students are struggling to finance and complete the postsecondary educations needed to secure middle-class lives.

State disinvestment has occurred alongside rapidly rising enrollments and demographic shifts that are yielding a more economically, racially and ethnically diverse college-age population that has greater financial need. In 2009, for example, 36 of every 100 undergraduate students were members of a racial or ethnic minority group, up from 21 of every 100 in 1990. Higher costs to students and their families are especially alarming in light of stagnant household incomes and the shift in state financial aid away from need-based programs.

COMMITMENT

These patterns threaten not just the future well-being of individual students, but also our longstanding commitment to equal access to higher education regardless of one's socioeconomic background, for as the costs of higher education increasingly shift to the individual, low-income students are becoming priced out of an education. It also threatens the future economic health of states, as low rates of college completion deprive states of the educated workforces needed to thrive in the 21st century. In short, state disinvestment in public higher education has exacted a high toll from individual students, their families and society at large, particularly during the 2000s, the period when the sizable Millennial generation began to reach college age.

To reverse these dangerous trends, policymakers and administrators must alter course and renew their support for public higher education.

This article is adapted from "The Great Cost Shift: How Higher Education Cuts Undermine the Future Middle Class," a report from Dēmos, a public policy research and advocacy organization based in New York City. The full report, and sources for the information above, are available at tinyurl.com/Great-Cost-Shift.

The next generation of voters



Hostos students sign up to vote during an on-campus registration drive earlier this semester staffed by members of the PSC as well as Hotel Workers Local 100 and Hostos student groups. A total of 158 new voters registered during the two days of tabling. A large youth turnout helped propel President Barack Obama to victory in 2008 and is considered to be essential to his re-election this year.

Shifting costs to students & families

Obama vs. Romney on higher ed

By PETER HOGNESS & CLARION STAFF

Barack Obama spent 12 years as a faculty member at the University of Chicago. Mitt Romney spent 18 years as a partner in Bain Capital. Their divergent views on government's role in college education may in part reflect these personal histories.

But whatever their origins, today the candidates' views on higher education funding are a strikingly consistent expression of the difference in their political philosophies. Romney's policies are based on his faith in profit-seeking institutions and mistrust of government. Obama advocates a robust federal role in supporting both access and "efficiency" in college education, and he has recently proposed a college-level "Race to the Top" fund to promote policy change toward those goals.

Until 2010, 75% of federally guaranteed student loans were made by private banks, which received a subsidy for doing so. Repayment was guaranteed by the taxpayers. As Education Secretary Arne Duncan told reporters, "Essentially, we give the banks our money, and they lend it back out to students with interest, and if the students can't pay, we pick up the tab."

The 2010 Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act eliminated guaranteed federal repayment of student loans made by private financial institutions. All federal student loans since July 1, 2010, have instead been direct loans, funded by the federal government and serviced by private companies under contract with the Department of Education. The Congressional Budget Office estimated the resulting cost savings at \$68 billion over 11 years.

PELL GRANTS

Those savings have been applied to a range of initiatives, such as increasing Pell grants. In the 2013-14 school year, the maximum annual Pell grant will increase to \$5,635, up 19% since Obama was elected. Future increases are tied to the Consumer Price Index. The White House said the reform had funded "the largest investment in student aid since the GI Bill."

Romney strongly opposed the shift to direct federal loans, which he has labeled a "nationalization." He vows to reverse it if elected, and return to reliance on private banks.

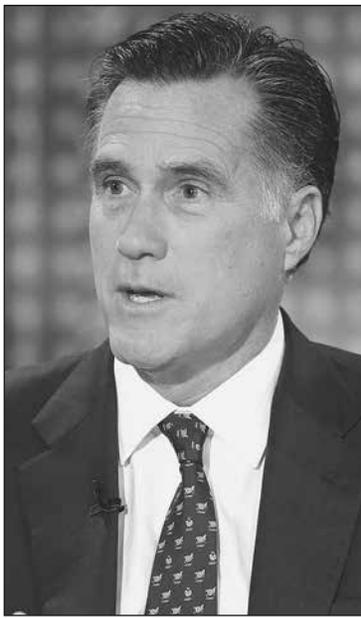
He proposes to "refocus" Pell grants to target the neediest students, without offering specifics. The budget plan of Romney's running mate, Rep. Paul Ryan – which Romney described as "excellent work" – would shrink the average Pell grant and limit Pell grant eligibility: according to the nonprofit Education Trust, about 1 million fewer students would qualify.

In a March 5 campaign stop in Mahoning Valley, Ohio, Romney told a high school student not to expect federal help with college costs. "I know that it would be popular for me to stand up and say I'm go-

Pell, Perkins & private profit



Chuck Kennedy/Official White House Photo



Mitt Romney Campaign

Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney (right) would reverse a number of higher education initiatives backed by President Obama (left), including providing more funding for Pell grants, doubling the number of college work study jobs and increasing regulation on for-profit colleges.

ing to give you government money to make sure you pay for your college. But I'm not going to promise that," Romney said. "What I'm going to tell you is shop around, get a good price.... Don't take on too much debt, and don't expect the government to forgive the debt that you take on." This was not a wayward comment in the heat of the campaign: a Romney policy paper cites increased Pell grant funding as a key example of "the expanding entitlement mentality."

The Obama administration has backed a limited loan forgiveness plan: its income-based repayment program currently caps student loan payments at 10% to 15% of discretionary income, and forgives loan balances after borrowers have made the income-based payments for 25 years (or 10 years for workers in public service).

The president has also asked Congress to make the American Opportunity Tax Credit permanent. The credit, which is set to expire this year, provides up to \$10,000 to students and families over four years of college attendance. Romney's tax proposal would let this credit expire, affecting 9.4 million students and families.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The Obama administration's current budget proposal calls for "doubling the number of work-study jobs" for college students, with an increase of 700,000 positions over five years. In contrast, Romney would reduce work-study slots by 129,000.

The president has advocated for the importance of the country's community colleges, often with a focus on job training. His administration has dedicated \$2 billion over four years to support community college partnerships with businesses, pro-

viding skills training for in-demand occupations. Obama's proposed 2013 budget would include an additional \$8 billion over three years for similar efforts. Romney rarely speaks about community colleges: his main policy paper on education mentions them only once.

Obama favors government role in boosting college access.

Obama supports and Romney opposes the Dream Act, which would make many undocumented immigrant students eligible for student loans, work-study, and in-state tuition rates. As governor, Romney vetoed a bill that would have allowed undocumented immigrants who had graduated from a Massachusetts high school to attend UMass at in-state rates. (The PSC was leading member of a coalition that successfully campaigned for a similar bill in New York.)

On tuition, the Obama administration declares that "declining state support for postsecondary education...is the primary driver of tuition increases at public institutions of higher education," and it emphasizes that public universities educate 70% of US students. "Even in nominal dollars," the White House observes, "state funding for higher education fell in more than 40 states between 2011 and 2012." President Obama has urged the National Governors' Association to reverse this trend and instead increase state funding for college education. Beyond this public advocacy, the administration is now proposing to condition some direct federal aid on whether states are "making a consistent financial commitment to higher education," to provide an incentive to "maintain adequate levels of funding" rather than repeated cuts.

Romney has expressed no concerns about falling state funding for public higher education. When

Romney was governor of Massachusetts, such budget cuts were his policy: between 2003 and 2007 Romney reduced public support for the UMass system by \$140 million, a cutback of 14%. Tuition and fees rose by 63% in the same period – before the 2008 economic crash.

Romney's analysis of rising tuition costs does not discuss his experience as governor. Instead, the Romney campaign says that tuition is going up because of too much federal aid: "Flooding colleges with federal dollars only serves to drive tuition higher," his position paper declares. "Mitt Romney understands that more spending is the last thing our schools need." Accordingly, Romney's solution to rising tuition is simple: cut direct federal aid, urge consumers to make careful, cost-conscious choices, and rely on market forces to eventually drive tuition down.

The Obama administration does not entirely disagree that unrestricted federal aid, could to some degree be a driver of college costs, especially at private institutions. It has proposed revising the formula for distributing campus-based federal aid in programs such as Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants and Perkins Loans to shift dollars away from schools with rising tuition and toward schools that keep tuition controlled, provide "good value" and increase degree completion by low-income students.

RACE TO THE TOP

In this vein, Obama has recently proposed a \$1 billion "Race to the Top" for college affordability and completion – and many CUNY faculty and staff are likely to have a split reaction to this new proposal. It would push states to maintain public funding for higher education and limit tuition hikes, departing from the decades-long national trend toward less public funding and increased reliance on student tuition (see page 6). But the Obama administration also contends that policies on "credit transfer, remediation and course completion can also increase college costs" by preventing students from following the "most efficient" route to a degree. Its proposed college-level Race to the Top would "help students waste fewer credits and finish faster," as a White House fact sheet puts it. This cost-cutting analysis is similar in many ways to the CUNY administration's description of its Pathways initiative, which has been strongly opposed by the PSC and elected faculty bodies (see page 11).

In K-12 education, Obama's Race to the Top programs have angered many teachers, who argue that they promote a narrowing of education and an emphasis on "teaching to the test." AFT President Randi Weingarten acknowledged as much when she spoke of the union's endorse-

ment of Obama at the AFT convention in July.

"Do we believe that this administration has put too much of a focus on testing and competition? Yes. And we will continue to push back," Weingarten said. "But we must recognize that President Obama's stimulus efforts in 2009 were a lifeline for public education and public services.... President Obama is working to make college more affordable, and to crack down on for-profit colleges and their deceptive practices, which are more likely to hand students a pile of debt than an actual degree."

FOR-PROFIT

For-profit colleges account for only 12% of all students in US higher education, but nearly 50% of all student loans in default. Overall, they charge higher tuition than nonprofit schools but have lower graduation rates. Critics like Rep. George Miller have said that too many of these "proprietary" schools are characterized by "overpriced tuition and predatory recruiting practices," often granting degrees of questionable value. Miller cites a recent study of 30 for-profit education companies, which found that on average they spent a greater share of revenue on marketing (23%) than on instruction (17%).

Obama has supported tighter rules on for-profit schools in order to discourage such abuses – for example, requiring at least 35% of former students to be currently repaying their loans. Challenged in court by an association of for-profit schools, the new rules were partially struck down in 2012. Romney said Obama had imposed ill-advised regulations that "made it even harder for some providers to operate while distorting their incentives."

In fact, Romney sees an expanded role for for-profit institutions as a key part of the solution to rising tuition costs. His campaign says

Romney emphasizes free-market formulas.

that to achieve lower tuition, government should "encourage market entry by innovative new education models," such as for-profit schools, and that regulations like the gainful employment rule will discourage such new players in the education market.

As an example of this kind of innovative institution, helping to "hold down the cost of education," Romney has repeatedly cited Florida's for-profit Full Sail University. But "Mr. Romney did not mention the cost of tuition at Full Sail, which runs more than \$80,000, for example, for a 21-month program in 'video game art,'" *The New York Times* reported earlier this year. Nor did Romney mention that Full Sail's well-paid CEO was chair of his campaign's state fundraising group in Florida. He has company: *USA Today* reports that for-profit higher education has been a major contributor to the Romney campaign.

CUNY beverage deal

By SARAH JAFFE

Last June, the CUNY Board of Trustees voted to offer the exclusive right to sell soft drinks, bottled water and other beverages “to a single manufacturer for the University as a whole.” Proposals will be considered for either cafeteria sales alone, or both cafeteria and vending machine sales together. The trustees pledged that a University-wide vendor will be chosen only if this would lead to “higher revenues for each of the colleges and the Central Office” than the current system of college-level beverage contracts. Proposals are due November 1.

LABOR RIGHTS

Companies expected to submit proposals include Coca-Cola, a student with knowledge of the process told *Clarion*. Though the trustees’ resolution stipulates that the chosen company should be a “responsive and responsible offeror,” Coca-Cola has faced widespread criticism for its labor rights record, particularly at its bottling plants in Colombia.

“All respondents to the request for proposals must enforce fair labor practices in the United States and abroad with respect to its employees and those of its bottlers, distributors and other contractors,” CUNY spokesperson Rita Rodin told *Clarion*. “The proposals must include evidence of these practices.” If so, labor advocates say, any proposal from Coca-Cola should be rejected.

COLOMBIA

About five dozen universities around the country, including Rutgers, University of California-Berkeley, and Manhattanville College, have stopped doing business with Coca-Cola due to concerns over the company’s record on labor rights, both in the US and abroad.

CUNY’s University Student Senate voted in 2006 to support a ban on Coca-Cola sales in the University system, citing human rights abuses aimed at union workers – including the use of paramilitary security forces who tortured and killed union activists – at Coca-Cola’s bottling plants in Colombia.

Three CUNY campuses have in fact dropped Coca-Cola due to labor rights concerns. Students organizing with the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke, a group of labor rights advocates, helped push the beverage giant out of Queensborough Community College, the Joseph Murphy Institute, and the CUNY School of Law.

“The evidence out there suggests that Coca-Cola’s been complicit in the hiring of paramilitaries to murder union members on bottling plant floors in Colombia,” said Dan Monahan, a CUNY Law School graduate who was involved in the successful effort to stop selling Coke products there. “CUNY should be a socially responsible organization,” he told *Clarion*. “It shouldn’t just do what-

Activists insist that ‘Coke is not it.’



What company will win exclusive rights to beverage sales on CUNY campuses? Coca-Cola is expected to seek the contract, but has been criticized over labor practices.

ever’s cheapest, to make a buck. In all aspects they should be socially responsible.” It was a message to which the Law School community was receptive, added Monahan, who is now a legal aid attorney in Texas: “It’s a public interest law school, so there’s a good group of public-interest-minded students and faculty” concerned about labor rights issues.

In 2004, Coca-Cola’s practices in Colombia were investigated by a fact-finding delegation from New York, which included representatives of the PSC, Communications Workers of America Local 1180, the Civil Service Employees Association, United Students Against Sweatshops and a member of the City Council. The delegation’s report concluded that Coca-Cola is “complicit in human rights abuses in Colombia” and that its “complicity is deepened by its repeated pattern of bringing criminal charges against union activists who have spoken out about the company’s collusion with the paramilitaries.”

KIDNAPPED

The report contains harrowing testimony from Colombian union activists. “My son was taken,” said Limberto Carranza, a Coca-Cola worker and union activist in Barranquilla, Colombia. “A couple of hooded men took him off his bicycle as he was riding home from school,” Carranza told the delegation. “He was beaten; that is to say, tortured. Afterwards, he was left in a drainage ditch, stunned and semi-conscious. They questioned my son about me. From the moment they started hitting him, they asked him where I

was and what was I involved in. Afterwards, they told him, in any case, they were going to kill his father.”

In the wake of the report, the PSC and its state affiliate, New York State United Teachers, voted not to sell or serve Coke products at their offices, conventions and other events. “The economic impact of that step was small,” said Jim Perlestein, co-chair of the PSC Solidarity Committee. “But it brought Coke’s abuses to the attention of thousands of union members.”

TIAA-CREF

A sign that the campaign to hold Coca-Cola accountable was gaining traction in higher education came in 2006 when TIAA-CREF, the retirement plan that covers the largest number of PSC members, divested itself of 1.25 million shares of Coca-Cola stock and excluded Coca-Cola from any future investments by its \$9 billion CREF Social Choice Account. TIAA-CREF took action after KLD Research & Analytics removed Coca-Cola from its Broad Market Social Index, a list of socially responsible corporations. Karin Chamberlain of KLD told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that its decision was based on several issues, including labor and human rights issues in Colombia and the marketing of sugary drinks to children.

Ray Rogers, of the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke, noted that it’s not just workers abroad who face abuses from Coca-Cola. Sixteen workers at two New York Coca-Cola plants, in Maspeth, Queens, and Elmsford in Westchester, sued the company

earlier this year, calling their workplaces a “cesspool of racial discrimination.” The suit charges that workers of color got less favorable assignments, were subject to unfair disciplinary action, and were a regular target of racial epithets. “I’ve never been called so many names as I have been at Coca-Cola,” Sondra Walker, one of the plaintiffs, told the *Daily News*.

Coca-Cola spokesperson Toney Anaya told the *News* that Coca-Cola does not tolerate discrimination, adding, “We take this matter seriously and are investigating the allegations.” Coca-Cola insists that it bears no responsibility for the long string of attacks on union activists at its Colombian bottling plants. But when the New York City

Social responsibility and labor rights at issue

Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) and the New York City Employees’ Retirement System (NYCERS), both Coca-Cola shareholders, requested that Coca-Cola agree to an independent human rights investigation into the allegations of abuse, the company rejected the idea.

“When students and professors organize at the universities and pressure these different companies, that’s when we actually see changes in policies,” Zachary Lerner, former Mid-Atlantic regional coordinator for United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS), who is now an organizer with New York Communities for Change. This kind of action, he said, “can make a dramatic difference for workers’ rights around the world.”

Adjunct health care update

By PETER HOGNESS

The Trustees of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund voted in September to extend adjunct health insurance for one additional month while a comprehensive proposed agreement is under final review. Coverage for eligible adjuncts under the terms currently in place will continue through October 31, and will be provided through the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund.

“Significant and rapid progress was made in September,” PSC President Barbara Bowen told *Clarion*. “I am grateful for adjuncts’ patience while we have worked to negotiate the fairest possible terms for future coverage. All of us on the bargaining team know this has been an extremely stressful time.” The goal remains to negotiate health insurance comparable to the current insurance, with no break in coverage, Bowen said.

UNCHANGED

The Trustees’ vote means that both eligibility and coverage for adjunct health insurance are still unchanged. Newly eligible adjuncts can and should sign up for coverage without delay. (See pscunywelfare.org/PDF/AdjunctEligibility.pdf for eligibility details.) “There is no waiting, assuming you meet the eligibility requirements,” said PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Executive Director Larry Morgan. Earlier this semester, at least one college had told adjuncts incorrectly to wait and sign up for the new plan. “We got that corrected from the top down,” said Morgan. “We have told CUNY that any new enrollments should in fact be given top priority.” Morgan asked any adjuncts who are eligible for the current plan but have been discouraged from signing up to contact the Welfare Fund at 212-354-5230.

What gets management’s attention, Lerner said, “is when you go after the pockets of these companies, by cutting contracts.”

Meanwhile, as the November 1 deadline on CUNY’s RFP approaches, activists will be watching to see if Coca-Cola is under consideration. They include Alex van Schaick, a student at the Law School who works with the Labor Coalition for workers Rights and Economic Justice – the same student group that worked to to ban sales of Coke products at CUNY Law. “That’s part of our institutional history,” said van Schaick.

WISE USE

“It’s imperative for public institutions to use their purchasing power wisely,” van Schaick told *Clarion*. “The University should not be supporting companies or entertaining bids from companies that have active campaigns against them,” for violations of labor rights.

SHOWDOWN IN THE SCHOOLS

The meaning of the Chicago teachers' strike

By KAREN LEWIS and RANDI WEINGARTEN

After more than a decade of top-down dictates, disruptive school closures, disregard of teachers' and parents' input, testing that squeezes out teaching, and cuts to the arts, physical education and libraries, educators in Chicago said "enough is enough." With strong support from parents and many in the community, teachers challenged a flawed vision of education reform that has not helped schoolchildren in Chicago or around the country. It took a seven-day strike – something no one does without cause – but with it, educators in Chicago have changed the conversation about education reform.

UNACCEPTABLE

These years of dictates imposed upon teachers left children in Chicago without the rich curriculum, facilities and social services they need. On picket lines, with their handmade signs, teachers provided first-person accounts of the challenges confronting students and educators. They made it impossible to turn a blind eye to the unacceptable conditions in many of the city's public schools.

Teachers and parents were united in the frustration that led to the strike. Nearly nine out of ten students in Chicago Public Schools live in poverty, a shameful fact that so-called reformers too often ignore, yet most schools lack even one full-time nurse or social worker. The district has made cuts where it shouldn't (in art, music, physical education and libraries), but hasn't cut where it should (class sizes and excessive standardized testing and test prep). The tentative agreement reached in Chicago aims to address all these issues.

Chicago's teachers see this as an opportunity to move past the random acts of "reform" that have failed to move the needle and toward actual systemic school improvement. The tentative agreement focuses on improving quality so that every public school in Chicago is a place where parents want to send their children and educators want to teach.

RICH CURRICULUM

First, use time wisely. The proposed contract lengthens the school day and year. A key demand by educators during the strike was that the district focus not just on instituting a longer school day, but on making it a better school day. Additional seat time doesn't constitute a good education. A well-rounded and rich curriculum, regular opportunities for teachers to plan and confer with colleagues, and time to engage students through discussions, group work and project-based learning – all these contribute to a high-quality education, and these should be priorities going forward.

Second, get evaluation right and don't fixate on testing. Effective school systems

use data to inform instruction, not as a "scarlet number" that does nothing to improve teaching and learning. One placard seen on Chicago's picket lines captured the sentiment of countless educators: "I want to teach to the student, not to the test." If implemented correctly, evaluations can help Chicago promote the continuous development of teachers' skills and of students' intellectual abilities (and not just their test-taking skills).

Third, fix – don't close – struggling schools. Chicago's teachers echoed the concerns of numerous parents and civil rights groups that the closing of struggling schools creates turmoil and instability but doesn't improve achievement. Low-performing schools improve not only by instituting changes to academics and enrichment, but also by becoming centers of their communities.

Schools that provide wraparound services – medical and mental-health services, mentoring, enrichment programs and social services – create an environment in which kids are better able to learn and teachers can focus more on instruction, knowing their students' needs are being met. Chicago, with an



Chicago teachers take to the streets with their parent, student and community allies.

87% child-poverty rate, should make these effective – and cost-effective – approaches broadly available.

Fourth, morale matters. Teachers who work with students in some of the most difficult environments deserve support and respect. Yet, they often pay for their dedication by enduring daily denigration for not single-handedly overcoming society's shortcomings. These indignities and lack of trust risk making a great profession an impossible one.

COLLECTIVE ACTION

In a period when many officials have sought to strip workers of any contractual rights or even a collective voice, the Chicago teachers strike showed that collective

action is a powerful force for change and that collective bargaining is an effective tool to strengthen public schools. Chicago's public-school teachers – backed by countless educators across the country – changed the conversation from the blaming and shaming of teachers to the promotion of strategies that parents and teachers believe are necessary to help children succeed.

It is a powerful example of solution-driven unionism and a reminder that when people come together to deal with matters affecting education, those who work in the schools need to be heard. When they are, students, parents and communities are better for it.

Karen Lewis is president of the Chicago Teachers Union. Randi Weingarten is president of the American Federation of Teachers. This article originally appeared in The Wall Street Journal on September 24.

Changing the conversation on reform

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 15 – NOVEMBER 18: The PSC Union Hall will be closed for renovations. Please note the alternate venues that will be used for the union events listed below.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 24 / 5:00-8:00 pm: Volunteer this election season with the Legislation Committee to work the phone bank at the PSC. 61 Broadway, 15th floor. For more information, e-mail Amanda Magalhaes, amagalhaes@psccmail.org.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25 / 5:00 pm: October PSC budget report to members before the October Delegate Assembly with PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant. Please note location: PSC Justice Room, 61 Broadway, 15th Floor.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25 / 6:30 pm: October PSC Delegate Assembly. Please note location:

UFT Building, 52 Broadway, 19th floor, Room BC. For more information, contact Barbara Gabriel, bgabriel@psccmail.org.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31 / 5:00-8:00 pm: Volunteer this election season with the Legislation Committee to work the phone bank at the PSC. 61 Broadway, 15th floor. For more information, e-mail Amanda Magalhaes, amagalhaes@psccmail.org.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5 / 1:00-3:00 pm: Featured speakers include Jared Herst, PSC Pensions & Health Benefits Coordinator, and a panel presentation on the future of the Social Safety Net. Please note location: The Center for Worker Education (CWE), 25 Broadway, 7th floor, Rooms 7-52 & 7-53. For more information, contact Jim Perlstein, jperlstein@bassmeadow.com.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9 / 4:00 pm: Adjunct faculty are meeting on the second Friday this month

due to the election campaign. Please note location: PSC Justice Room, 61 Broadway, 15th Floor. For more information, contact Marcia Newfield, revolu@earthlink.net.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9 / 6:00 pm: Labor Goes to the Movies presents *Bab El-Oued City*. Winner of the International Critics' Prize at Cannes and the grand prize at the 1994 Arab Film Festival, this film follows the odyssey of a young Algerian man, Boualem, amidst anti-government riots and then a devastating civil war. Please note location: The Center for Worker Education (CWE), 25 Broadway, 7th Floor. For more information, contact Sarah Hughes, shughes@psccmail.org.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 15 / 6:30 pm: October PSC Delegate Assembly. Please note location: UFT Building, 52 Broadway, 19th Floor, Room BC. For more information, contact Barbara Gabriel, bgabriel@psccmail.org.

Clarion OCTOBER 2012

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York, collective bargaining representative of the CUNY instructional staff. Vol. 41, No. 6. PSC/CUNY is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 2334), AFL-CIO, the New York City Central Labor Council, and New York State United Teachers. Published by PSC/CUNY, 61 Broadway, 15th floor, New York, NY 10006. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Website: www.psc-cuny.org. E-mail: phogness@psccmail.org. All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

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BUILDING FOR CHANGE

PSC's political strategy

By STEVE LONDON

PSC First Vice President

Much ink has been spilled over reasons for the waning political clout of labor unions. The war on labor unions by corporate interests, now decades old, has been effective in reducing labor's ranks. Private-sector unions have been decimated as jobs have been shipped overseas, the workforce down-sized, wages cut and pensions destroyed. Public-sector unions are now under severe attack.

Because of the corporate dominance of the political process during an international crisis of capitalism, austerity policies are presented as the "normal" response to economic collapse. Hence, cuts in the social safety net, public workers' wages and pensions, and union rights are the currency of political discourse today.

Industrial actions, such as strikes, have become extremely difficult to organize, especially in the public sector. A strike can be a very effective political tool, as we recently saw in the Chicago teachers' strike, but overall the number of strikes has fallen precipitously in recent decades.

Confronting this stark reality, union leaders often try to position their union tactically through transactional politics to get the "best deal possible." Sometimes this works, and with a mobilized membership advances have been made by our union and others. But it is difficult for an individual union to make major advances on its own, or maintain a highly mobilized membership by itself. Without broader union unity, the "best" deals made are often bad ones, whose terms give members good reason for discontent. To say "it could have been worse," even if true, does not make a bad deal fair or satisfying.

Facing this very difficult political reality, what is the political action strategy of the PSC? How do we achieve greater power and voice to help us better serve our students and the working people of New York?

THE INSIDE STRATEGY

It is the PSC's responsibility to represent our membership in the halls of political power. The PSC engages with elected officials, whether Democrats or Republicans, lobbying and arguing for better CUNY budgets, for workers' rights and benefits, and for support for better contracts. In electoral politics, we have worked with our union affiliates to build support for progressive candidates who will be more sympathetic to our issues and the interests of working people. Mobilizing member support for these candidates is central to success: going door-to-door, making phone calls, donating to PSC-COPE (the union's Committee on Political Action), and voting.

THE OUTSIDE STRATEGY

Working this "inside" game, however, has not been enough to achieve the working conditions we need or the learning conditions our students deserve. More broadly, the labor movement's growing reliance on inside influence, electoral strategies and deal-making has proved insufficient to turn back the rising tide of inequality, insecurity and injustice for working people.

Therefore, the PSC is also working "outside" the halls of power to help build independent political forces and social movements.

Working with other unions, community groups and grassroots organizations, the PSC's goal is to shift the public agenda away from austerity and towards greater social and economic justice. For example, the PSC was an early and strong supporter of Occupy Wall Street, which blew open a national political discussion on the growing inequalities of wealth and power in the US today. We are part of Strong Economy for All, a union-community coalition that worked with the Occupy movement last year to challenge Governor Andrew Cuomo's austerity agenda through protest and direct action, pushing Albany to extend part of the "millionaires' tax" on the highest incomes in New York – a proposal that had been declared "off the table" just six months earlier.

THE INSIDE-OUTSIDE STRATEGY

A sophisticated "inside-outside" strategy recognizes both the importance of maximizing tactical leverage through a mobilized membership within the confines of the existing relations of power, while also working to change those power relations to expand the boundaries of what is politically possible.

The PSC's political action strategy is rooted in our interests and the interests of working people. It is because these interests are often not recognized by elected officials that the PSC works hard to build coalitions and movements that will set and pursue a progressive agenda for higher education and for working people at the city, state and national levels. While we are campaigning for President Barack Obama's reelection and the election of many progressive state legislators on November 6, we are working equally hard at building independent political structures that will hold elected officials accountable, whoever they are.

THE CASE FOR ELECTING OBAMA AND THE STATE SENATE DEMOCRATS

The choice in the presidential election is very clear. For example, President Obama strongly supported and enhanced Pell grants for our students while lowering their interest rates on loans. He provided needed funding for community colleges through the stimulus act. He passed "Obamacare" and signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which advanced working women's rights to equal pay. Obama's recent executive order on immigration allows young undocumented immigrants who were brought to the US by their parents to attend college and work without fear of deportation.

Sharp contrasts and concrete differences like these exist on dozens of issues: Mitt Romney has pledged to eviscerate collective bargaining (especially in the public sector); increase borrowing costs for students; cut back student aid and federal funding for colleges; reduce taxes on the wealthy; cut social safety net programs and voucherize Medicare; scale back environmental regulation; and repeal Obamacare and increased banking regulation. Among Romney's big financial contributors is the for-profit higher education sector, which is looking for government deregulation so they can more easily prey upon our students.

A Romney victory would bring into government a corporate and political class that adheres to an extreme right-wing ideology that can do untold harm to women, working people, people of color and the poor.



George Bates

Many of us have real political differences with President Obama on education policy, the war in Afghanistan, health-care policy, and his own version of austerity. But with an Obama administration, we will have far more political space to advance our agenda than we would with a Romney administration. With Romney in office, unions would be defending our right to exist, as in Wisconsin, and working people would be fighting to maintain our most basic rights.

The PSC is also advocating electing Democrats to the New York State Senate this year, so that Democrats will win a majority and hold Senate leadership positions. In particular, we are strongly supporting the reelection of Senator Joseph Addabbo in Queens (Senate District 15), the campaign of Andrew Gounardes in Brooklyn (SD 22) to oust Republican State Senator Marty Golden, and the candidacy of George Latimer in Westchester (SD 37) for an open State Senate seat. All three candidates are running on both the Working Families Party (WFP) and Democratic Party lines.

Democrats are currently in the minority in the Senate. They tried to derail a vote on the Tier VI pension cutbacks by walking out, but they did not have enough strength to stop it. Governor Cuomo won the support of the Republican State Senate leadership for his Tier VI proposal by supporting a redistricting proposal that gives the Republicans a better chance to remain in control of the Senate.

Why would Cuomo want to maintain a Republican-led Senate? Because it allows him to play the Republican Senate against the Democrat-led Assembly, which has a Democratic Caucus that is far more pro-

gressive and labor-friendly than is Cuomo. Electing a Democratic-led State Senate will provide more political space for PSC and other labor unions to pursue our agenda.

THE NYC 2013 STRATEGY

The Democratic Party is a big tent with many different political tendencies. For example, Governor Cuomo has behind him real estate and corporate interests who support his austerity policies and attacks on public-sector pensions. But in New York City, we elected a Comptroller and Public Advocate and many City Councilmembers who advocate a grassroots democratic politics (with a small "d") and support higher taxes for the wealthy and limits on corporate power. A number of Democrats on the City Council, such as Jumaane Williams, Ydanis Rodriguez and several others, have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Occupy Wall Street in the face of police attacks on the right to dissent.

With other unions and organizations, the PSC is currently engaged in recruiting and supporting candidates for public office in the 2013 New York City elections. The goal is to elect Democratic candidates who are labor-friendly, understand the importance of CUNY to New York City, and will represent the 99% in office. We hope to win a significant progressive bloc – perhaps a majority – on the New York City Council and in City-wide offices.

THE PSC AND THE WORKING FAMILIES PARTY

This year the PSC affiliated with the Working Families Party because the WFP sits at a crossroads of grassroots organizations, unions and Democratic Party politics. As such, the WFP is an important force for progressive politics in New York State, especially at the local level where WFP support has meant the difference between victory and defeat for progressive candidates in both Democratic primary and general election contests.

The WFP is one place where inside and outside political forces meet: sometimes they easily coexist and sometimes they don't. For example, the WFP was an early supporter of Occupy Wall Street and is a major proponent of the NYC 2013 strategy. At the same time, Cuomo ran for Governor on the WFP line – a pragmatic move aimed at maintaining their ballot status, but a decision with which many – including many members of both the PSC and the WFP – strongly disagreed.

For the PSC, the WFP presents many opportunities to reach a diverse network of community, union and social movement activists with our particular concerns, and to make common cause with them in a broad-based coalition. Our goal in affiliating with the WFP is to build unity behind a progressive agenda – including supporting CUNY and our students – and to elect candidates who will give that agenda consistent support.

The elements of the PSC's political action strategy have been approved by the PSC Delegate Assembly or the Executive Council. For this strategy to work, however, we need the participation of members at all levels. Knocking on doors in labor walks for candidates, making calls in our election phone-banks, interviewing candidates, helping PSC members connect their community and social justice organizing to the PSC's political work, face-to-face meetings with legislators, donating money to PSC-COPE to finance these activities, and voting for pro-union candidates – we need your participation in whatever way you can provide it.

If you might want to get involved, please contact Amanda Magalhaes in the PSC office at amalgahaes@pscmail.org. You can learn more the PSC's political action web page, at psc-cuny.org/cope.

An inside-outside approach is effective.

AUSTERITY EDUCATION

The real agenda of Pathways

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

Why is the CUNY administration risking so much for Pathways? If you accept the premise that Pathways is about “facilitating student transfer,” 80th Street’s position seems inexplicable. Apparently for the sake of implementing a new transfer policy, the CUNY administration is willing to degrade general education, alienate almost the entire faculty, withstand two lawsuits, resort to threats and intimidation, force department chairs to choose between academic integrity and departmental survival, give college presidents the message that they may be fired if they don’t deliver votes on Pathways courses, risk national censure for violating academic freedom, and face certain administrative chaos next year.

NOT ABOUT TRANSFER

It doesn’t make sense. If Pathways really were about facilitating transfer, there would be rational ways to address the problem and restore equilibrium, even now. Elected faculty governance bodies, already at work on an alternative proposal, could be given a year to come up with a solution that enhances rather than undermines the CUNY education. Existing pathways – ones that work well – for transfer between colleges and departments could be expanded. Connections between two-year and four-year colleges could be deepened. It might even be possible to reimagine the whole concept of general education for a heterogeneous, striving, urban population. But any honest approach to student transfer would have to include what the Pathways proposal studiously avoids: the urgent need for more investment. Most of the difficulties students experience in transferring would disappear if CUNY were funded at a level that allowed enough sections of classes, enough full-time faculty, and enough counselors to give students the individual attention they need.

The CUNY administration hasn’t considered the obvious alternative approaches to improving student transfer problems because Pathways is not about transfer. It is about “the college completion agenda” – a national higher education agenda that, while it names a worthy goal, is ultimately tailored to reinforce economic austerity. It is promoted by many of the same interests that are behind the testing-not-teaching “reform” movement in K-12 education. Even the name Pathways is not original; it has appeared since 2005 in documents issued by the Lumina Foundation, one of the main proponents of the agenda, and a foundation whose assets derive from the student loan industry.

NATIONAL SCALE

We make a serious error of scale if we think of Pathways as a purely local phenomenon or the brainchild of Vice Chancellor Logue. In a policy world where universities are increasingly judged – and funded – on a single measure of success, college completion, 80th Street is attempting to make sure CUNY measures up. CUNY is actually a latecomer to this

trend, which has already remade general education at many other public university systems, often over faculty resistance. Pathways is the CUNY administration’s attempt to make sure that CUNY is not classified according to this new standard, as it was in 1999 as “an institution adrift.”

COLLEGE COMPLETION

To understand the CUNY administration’s loyalty to Pathways, we need to grasp how influential the college completion agenda has become. Public policy on public higher education has been privatized. Private foundations, often with support from the finance industry, have carved out a huge role for themselves in public policy, especially in the arena of education. Starting about 2005, just as public funding for higher education was going into steep decline nationwide, many of the private interests that have funded the drive to reshape K-12 education through relentless testing, charter schools, closing of “failing” public schools, mass firing of teachers, and widespread standardization have focused on colleges and universities. Lumina, and later the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, played a major part in shifting the focus of national higher edu-

cation policy from access to completion. They poured money into grants for states and universities that were willing to raise completion rates. Together with other foundations, they funded the new organization Complete College America. President Obama’s announcement in 2010 of the goal of 60% of Americans with college degrees comes right out of this agenda, as does his current policy paper that includes streamlining transfer of credits as part of higher education reform.

Let’s be clear: college faculty and staff are uniformly in support of college completion. That’s one big reason we do what we do. Too many students in US colleges and universities take much longer than they had planned to graduate, and far too many never graduate at all. But the reasons for low graduation rates nationally, as at CUNY, have far more to do with underfunding, student debt, and the multiple economic pressures on middle- and working-class students than with problems in student transfer. The solution is to give students more, not less. What we need is a dramatic reversal of the deliberate economic austerity policies that have been used to justify starving public higher education of funds.

A national drive to ration higher ed

STANDARDIZING

Instead, the college completion agenda, like its better-known counterpart of “education reform” in K-12 schools, suggests that private corporations can fill the void. The standardization of curriculum that is the heart of Pathways is akin to the standardization we have seen elsewhere at CUNY, such as with CUNYfirst. A CUNY-wide general education structure not only consolidates central control and deprofessionalizes the faculty. It also provides an opening, as the “reform” agenda has in the schools, for standardized tests, standardized syllabi and even standardized faculty evaluation--all offered at a profit. States and local governments spent \$88 billion in higher education funding in 2011; if even a fraction of that were privatized, the profits could be enormous. As many commentators have observed, education is one of the few remaining arenas in which the market is not yet dominant; Pathways is part of structural adjustment for universities.

However benign the goal of improving graduation rates, Pathways is not politically innocent. It is austerity education for jobs in an austerity economy. It is about spending less per student. It is about graduating more students in a shorter time at lower cost. Most cruelly, it is about lowering the expectations of working-class, poor and middle-class students. Pathways, like everything else in America, is about race.

STANDING UP

Ultimately, Pathways and its analogues in other states are a means of rationing higher education. The great expansion in access to higher education that characterized the last 40 years is already being reversed, precisely as the majority of the college-age population becomes people of color. Working-class and poor students who do manage to stay in college will find a stripped-down, just-enough college education. Higher education will continue, but it will be rationed. That’s why the battle at Queensborough is so significant. There, one department’s faculty took a stand against the rationing of education for their students. For that they were threatened with everything from cancellation of courses to firing of untenured faculty. Yet now faculty across the University are preparing to take a similar stand.

If you need to be convinced that education is being rationed, take a look at the full-page ads for the new, for-profit school Avenues, where tuition is \$39,750 a year. Its chairman is Benno Schmidt, Jr., Chair of the CUNY Board of Trustees. While the general education curriculum Schmidt ushered through for CUNY students does not mandate even a single required foreign language course, the curriculum at Avenues – starting in elementary school – promises fluency in at least one additional language. Fluency is essential for the children of the rich, apparently, but even one required three-hour language course is too extravagant for the children of the poor.

When the Chicago teachers went out on strike, largely over the dilution of education and deprofessionalization of teachers, their president Karen Lewis announced, “We are fighting for the soul of public education.” Something very like the soul of higher education is at stake in Pathways.



George Bates



Do it on Row D this Nov. 6

This election consider voting for Barack Obama and other candidates on Row D of your ballot, the Working Families Party line. Since 1998 the WFP has steadily increased its share of the vote. The PSC, which affiliated with the WFP last year, can help continue that momentum.

The WFP is an important force for progressive politics, especially at the local level. Voting on the WFP line is a way to show candidates who run on more than one

ballot line that they owe much of their support – and perhaps their margin of victory – to progressives and the labor movement. More rarely, a candidate is elected on the WFP line alone: these have been some of our most pro-labor elected officials.

Add your voice to the broad-based alliance of unions and community-based organizations that make up the WFP. When you vote on November 6, do it on Row D.

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Bargaining for a better RF

By JOHN TARLETON

In 2011, \$383 million flowed into CUNY from public and private grants secured by CUNY faculty and staff. These grants, vital to the life of the University, are administered by the professional staff at the CUNY Research Foundation (RF-CUNY) Central Office, who coordinate the disbursement of funds and maintain the payroll for grant-funded employees.

The RF Central Office staff have been PSC members since 1974, and their bargaining unit has 95 members. They are now in negotiations for a new union contract. With their current three-year contract set to expire on December 31, the first round of talks for a successor agreement took place September 27. Clarion spoke with Thomas Kim and Abel Guan of the RF-Central Office bargaining team about what they hope to gain in this round of bargaining and how they plan to achieve it.

Clarion: What are some of the issues in this round of bargaining?

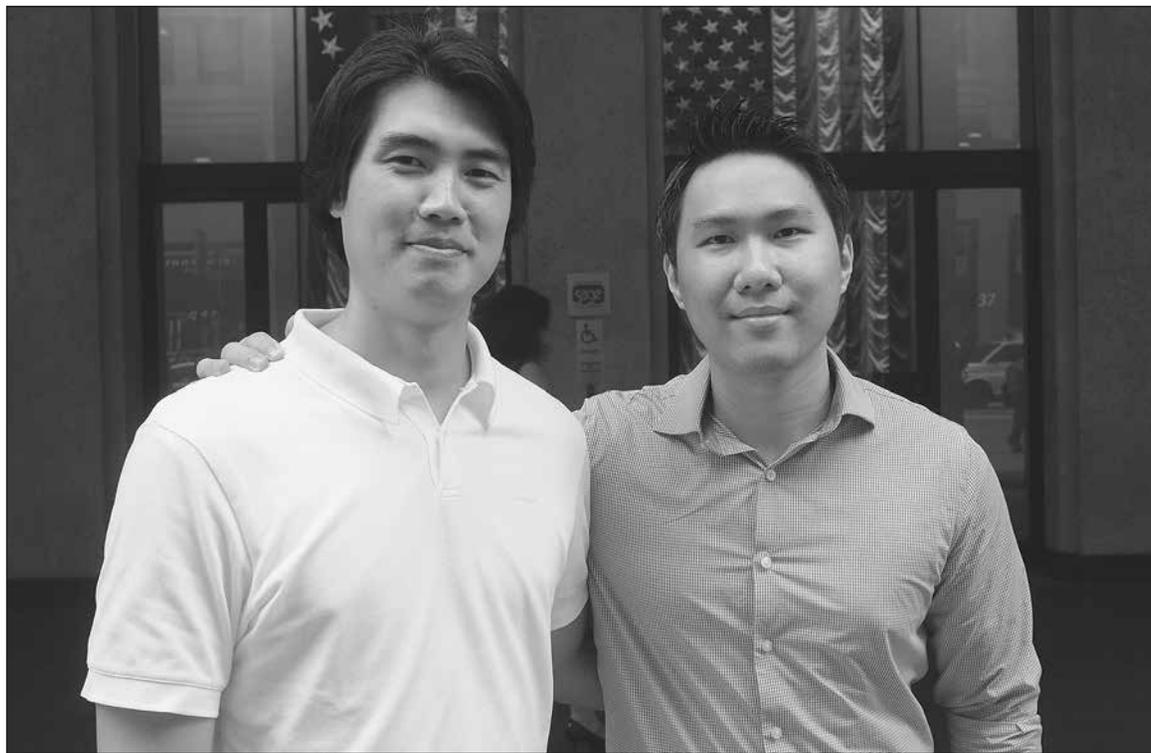
Thomas Kim: So far we have made non-economic demands, the most important of which involve our leave time. One key issue is that we want to be able to use our sick days to take care of a sick child or family member.

Abel Guan: We discussed this with our members and everyone has circumstances outside of the workplace that require them to take time off to care for others. Why shouldn't you have the ability to take the day off to make sure that your spouse or family members are okay?

Clarion: What about economic issues?

Guan: We expect management to make an economic proposal soon. We certainly believe our members deserve a fair pay increase and should be able to maintain their current level of health coverage while minimizing any increase in

Many issues to be addressed



RF-Central Office bargaining team members Thomas Kim (left) and Abel Guan (right)

employee contributions to health insurance premiums.

Kim: Our workloads are growing. There's a lot more to manage, a lot more to do. Management has to realize that as we grow, you've got to give back to the employees.

We're committed to providing the best support we can to grant recipients, and a good contract will help us do that.

Clarion: You're both new members of the union bargaining team. How did it feel to sit for the first time at the bargaining table across from management?

Kim: It felt good. There was a lot of anticipation building toward this moment. It's nice to finally get the process moving.

Clarion: What led you to become a

member of your chapter's bargaining team?

Guan: This is my first time being so involved with the union. When I started learning more about our union and the contract we have, I realized that being more involved could really help my fellow workers. When it came time to select department reps, everybody came to me and said, "We want to nominate you. You are a great speaker, you will represent us well." I was a little surprised, though I thought my experience as a board member at my condominium might come in handy.

Kim: My name got thrown out there after I asked a lot of questions at union meetings and got really curious about the whole process of collective bargaining. This is the first time I've been in a union and the self-

empowerment we have is nice. I've previously worked in corporate environments where policy was dictated and workers did not have a voice.

My dad was in a union, with the electrical engineers in Brooklyn, and I've been leaning toward the more activist side of politics. So, it's great to be able to act on that. If I didn't believe in the union, I wouldn't be here.

Clarion: What advice did your father give you, when you told him you were on the union bargaining team?

Kim: He said you've got to stay strong on your positions. You have to give a good fight and be vocal about it. And when the time comes, we'll have to organize rallies and other ways for the employees' voices to be heard, whether that's shouting

or making picket signs or handing out leaflets.

Clarion: The RF serves CUNY, but since it is technically a separate, private entity, you can go on strike, something that public-sector workers are prohibited from doing in New York State by the Taylor Law.

Kim: Knowing that we can go on strike is an important option to have. It's one that's going to be in our back pocket if it comes to that. We hope to settle without strife, but we are prepared to fight.

Clarion: In the RF Central Office, people like Tony Dixon and Dawn Sievers have been longtime leaders and served on the bargaining team several times in the past. In this contract round, the talks and the chapter's contract campaign are being led by younger chapter members like yourselves. What has been your relationship to these older veterans?

Guan: We have a great relationship. We go to them for advice every day to talk about strategy for how to get the best contract for our members.

Kim: Dawn gave me her binder from the last contract negotiations. It has just been a wealth of information, with a timeline and detailed notes on everything from how management reacted to their proposals to when stalemates occurred to when to give updates and get everyone involved. It's given me a general overview of what to expect.

Clarion: How do you plan to communicate with members about the negotiations?

Kim: We'll do it the old-fashioned way – just walk around the office and get the word out person-to-person, as well as by e-mail, the website and Facebook.

Clarion: What's the key thing for winning a good contract?

Kim: Our work affects the whole university, and it's important for the entire PSC to be aware of what's going on at the Research Foundation. When the time comes, we may need other union members' support to get a fair contract concluded.

Gary Schreier