

# LITTLE PROGRESS IN CONTRACT TALKS

## CLARION STAFF (May '05 *Clarion*)

PSC and University management negotiating teams held a collective bargaining session on Tuesday, May 3. It was the first session in more than a month, despite requests from the union to meet more frequently.

There were no dramatic developments in the May 3 session, with CUNY management refusing to make any movement toward the economic proposal put forward by the PSC on March 22. (See page 6 of the April 2005 *Clarion*, at [www.pscunyc.org/communications.htm](http://www.pscunyc.org/communications.htm).) Management raised questions about various aspects of the union's proposal and suggested some possible new positions on one non-economic issue. But in the area where the gap between the two sides is particularly large, the overall economic package, management was unwilling to increase its offer.

Union representatives argued that the PSC's proposal offers the basis for a settlement that is both fair and achievable. The union's proposed package would provide for recurring funds – not just one-shot measures – to close the gap between expenses and employer contributions for the PSC/CUNY Welfare Fund, which has created the Fund's financial crisis. PSC representatives reiterated the union's unwillingness to sacrifice salary increases to maintain health care benefits.

## NEW ISSUES

On other issues, the PSC bargaining team made detailed presentations on two points that had not been fully discussed at the previous session. One was the need for equity in annual leave for library faculty, who saw their leave cut back to 6 weeks in 1988 but still face the same research and publication requirements as other faculty in order to achieve tenure. The other presentation focused the need to redefine the position of continuing education teachers who spend 900 hours per year in the classroom, yet are not classified as full-time. (See article, page 7 of May '05 *Clarion*.)

In trying to make the case for

CUNY's current economic proposal, management representatives defended their 6.25% offer and insisted that it does *not* represent a pay cut relative to the cost of living. They pointed to CUNY's system of annual salary increments, and argued that the combination of increments and management's proposed salary increases (which under management's proposal would range from 0% to 2.75% per year over four years) is not so low.

But union representatives respond that this is a misrepresentation of the existing contract provision for annual increments. "This provision was negotiated and paid for many contracts ago, and it continues in the present contract just as other provisions do," said Barbara Bowen, the PSC's president and chief negotiator. "Increments are not a new part of the economic settlement." Bowen added that annual increments are based on a recognition of the increased value that faculty and staff bring to their work as they gain seniority in their positions.

Union negotiators also point out that some of the PSC's most senior members do not gain from the increments at all, because they are at the top of their salary scale. This applies to more than 1,000 PSC members, while others work in titles where there are no increments or they are not annual.

## EQUITY

"What PSC members need is a settlement that provides real salary increases across the board and brings CUNY closer to the competitive salary levels to which it was once committed," Bowen said.

The April 21 meeting of the PSC's Delegate Assembly saw debate over a tentative agreement that would give faculty counselors hired since August the same annual leave and workload as those hired earlier, and would allow employees in HEO titles with the requisite advanced degree to work as clinical psychological counselors for students.

Faculty counselors from BMCC were sharply critical of the latter provision as a danger to future hiring in faculty counselor positions, and drew some support from other delegates. Faculty counselors from some other colleges have strongly supported the proposal, but were not present for the discussion.