

PSCcuny/ Professional Staff Congress / City University of New York

61 Broadway, Suite 1500 • New York, New York 10006 • 212/354-1252 • Fax 212/302-7815

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November 20, 2017

Mr. William C. Thompson
Chairperson, Board of Trustees
The City University of New York
205 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

Dear Chairperson Thompson:

The current collective bargaining agreement between the Professional Staff Congress and the City University of New York expires on November 30. On behalf of the 30,000 CUNY faculty and staff represented by the PSC, I hereby submit a formal request to the University to begin collective bargaining for a successor to the 2010-17 contract without delay. The six-year wait for the last contract and the five-year wait for CUNY to make an economic offer were inexcusable. The membership of the PSC will not tolerate another excessively delayed contract settlement.

We approach this round of bargaining, the first under your chairmanship of the Board, as an opportunity to start anew and achieve measurable gains for CUNY students by improving the working conditions and compensation of CUNY's faculty and staff.

The PSC calls on you to exercise your authority under Article II, Section 2.3.b. of the CUNY Bylaws to assume principal responsibility for communications with the mayor of New York City and the governor of New York State, and to ensure that both City and State promptly provide the funding necessary for a good contract. Decades of planned under-funding for CUNY by New York State and New York City have meant that CUNY tuition has risen sharply, that salaries are no longer competitive, that CUNY relies on 14,000 teaching adjuncts paid at an obscenely low rate, and that working conditions actively undermine our ability to serve our students well.

While the CUNY Board and administration may accept that austerity funding is good enough for our students, the members of the PSC do not. The contract proposals we have developed originate in an understanding that our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. We urgently seek changes in our terms and conditions of employment in order to make CUNY a university worthy of our students' aspirations for their lives.

Our salaries and working conditions must be made competitive with those at comparable universities. CUNY suffers, and our students suffer, when the University struggles to attract and retain the leading faculty and staff in their fields.

To address these needs, we call for a 5 percent salary increase in every year of the contract. Only by substantially increasing salaries will CUNY be able to reverse the severe salary erosion of past decades and begin to approach competitive pay. We call for a fair wage for adjuncts, a minimum of \$7,000 per three-credit course. CUNY devalues our labor—and *its students*—when it pays less than \$3,500 per course. Thousands of adjuncts attempt to live on that wage, and it is hardly a living wage. When the CUNY Board of Trustees pays the majority of the faculty—adjuncts—at a shamefully low rate, the Board sends a message to CUNY students. The message is: your education does not matter; you do not matter. We want that message to change.

American Federation of Teachers Local 2334

New York State United Teachers • New York State AFL-CIO

American Association of University Professors • New York City Central Labor Council



We call for protection of academic quality and scholarly integrity in the use of online teaching. We call for fair salaries for full-time staff and faculty at the lowest end of the salary scale and for graduate employees. And we call for material support for department chairs, who are expected to carry an ever-increasing workload while also being responsible for intellectual leadership in their fields.

Faced with CUNY's current uncompetitive pay, excessive workloads and often decrepit buildings, many CUNY faculty and staff are actively seeking jobs at institutions that will treat them better. Some of our outstanding colleagues have already left. The University's current targeted hiring initiatives are unlikely to succeed unless compensation and conditions are improved CUNY-wide. CUNY's claim to be "the greatest urban university in the world" is incongruous with salaries and workloads that make the University uncompetitive in hiring and with working conditions that impede our ability to teach, conduct research, and serve our students.

Each of the union's contract proposals is about enhancing the quality of education for our students, the service we provide to the public, and the research and scholarship we generate. We call on the University to begin bargaining without delay and to negotiate a fully funded contract that advances our work.

The members of the PSC have been told for decades that there is not enough money to fund CUNY adequately or to fund fair contracts for the faculty and staff. We do not accept that position, even in the current fiscal and political climate. Funding for CUNY and our contract is a question of priorities. If access to a top-quality college education in New York State is truly a priority, then elected representatives must enact policies that secure and allocate the necessary funds.

The PSC stands ready to enter into productive bargaining immediately. We hope that the Board and the CUNY administration will share the union's goal of ending austerity conditions for CUNY students by ending austerity conditions for the faculty and staff. The PSC is committed to achieving a contract that allows CUNY to live up to its beautiful founding mission. We ask you to join us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Bowen".

Dr. Barbara Bowen
President, Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

cc: The Board of Trustees, CUNY
James B. Milliken, Chancellor, CUNY
Pamela S. Silverblatt, Vice Chancellor for Labor Relations, CUNY
Professional Staff Congress Membership