



**Pathways:  
CUNY begins  
to budge**

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## J.B. MILLIKEN NAMED CHANCELLOR

# FROM NEBRASKA TO CUNY

James B. Milliken has been appointed the new chancellor of CUNY. President of the University of Nebraska since 2004, Milliken is described by Nebraska faculty as a pragmatic and effective administrator who recently won increased funding for public higher education from his state's conservative lawmakers. "We stand

ready to work with the new chancellor as productively as we can," said PSC President Barbara Bowen, who urged Milliken to rescind Pathways and be aggressive in pursuing a fair economic settlement for the union's contract. Milliken will take office no later than June 1.

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## PSC contract

At his first State of the City address (delivered at LaGuardia Community College), Mayor Bill de Blasio said that New York City faces “unprecedented fiscal challenges.” Among the most serious is that 152 municipal union contracts are unresolved, including that of the PSC.

Because Mayor Michael Bloomberg made the political decision in his last three budgets to deplete the entire City “labor reserve” and leave no money for collective bargaining, no municipal union was willing to settle a new contract with the Bloomberg administration.

Now all eyes are on the new mayor’s progressive agenda and the outcome of legal proceedings for the United Federation of Teachers and the New York State Nurses Association. The rulings these unions receive on retroactive salary increases could influence the economic offers made to all other unions, including the PSC.

The position of the PSC is doubly complex, because funding for the union’s contract must be approved by New York State as well as New York City. “We are prepared to work cooperatively and to fight for the contract we deserve,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “We understand the fiscal challenges, but both the City and the State have surpluses, and there is enough money for a fair settlement at CUNY.” -PH

# CUNY begins to budge on Pathways

By PETER HOGNESS

CUNY’s central administration has announced significant changes to its Pathways curriculum, conceding to some of the criticisms raised by faculty governance and the PSC. The changes were outlined in a February 3 memo from Interim Chancellor William Kelly to CUNY college presidents and deans, on the process for annual review and evaluation of Pathways that was slated to start in 2013. (See [tinyurl.com/Kelly-Pways-2-3-2014](http://tinyurl.com/Kelly-Pways-2-3-2014).)

### A FIRST STEP

“This memo is the first crack in CUNY’s Pathways armor,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “Coming on top of the union’s arbitration victory in December, the changes signal a growing realization that Pathways doesn’t work. The administration is still wedded to Pathways, but it has quietly reversed its position on some key points – course hours and, above all, the inclusion of a role for faculty governance.”

According to Kelly’s memo, there will no longer be a three-hour limit on general education courses. Pathways “calls for a 30-credit curriculum” in CUNY-wide general

## Kelly makes some changes

education requirements, “and this will remain in place,” Kelly wrote; the three-credit limit for Pathways courses will also remain in effect. But in terms of time spent in class, “beginning in Fall 2014, colleges can determine how many hours to allocate to courses in the [Pathways] Common Core and will have discretion to allocate hours to courses as they choose,” the memo said.

In addition, the CUNY-wide committee that accepts or rejects general education courses based on Pathways rules will no longer be handpicked by CUNY central administration. “Faculty members serving on the CUNY-wide Common Core Course Review Committee (CCCRC) will be chosen through college governance processes,” Kelly announced, “beginning with those identified to serve during the 2014-2015 academic year.”

Finally, Kelly’s memo encouraged colleges to seek waivers from Pathways rules whenever “a major or degree program cannot be accommodated” within the

Pathways framework, as has been especially common with programs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The three-hour limit had caused particular problems with first-year English composition courses. Prior to Pathways, most CUNY colleges had adopted a four-hour, three-credit model as the best way to give composition students the instruction and support they need. Such four-hour, three-credit classes are now allowed without any special permission. Kelly’s memo did not address whether faculty time in that fourth hour would have to be “paid for” from local college budgets.

While longer hours will be allowed, Pathways courses are still limited to three credits. As a result, Pathways still interferes with making laboratory sessions a routine part of introductory science instruction, faculty say.

“In the sciences, it wasn’t just the hours issue,” explained Saavik Ford, associate professor of astronomy at Borough of Manhattan Community College. “Labs are typically two to three hours per week, which would be expected to go on top of three hours of lecture per week, so more than three credits had been the norm.”

While the CUNY administration has said lab sessions can be organized as a separate three-hour, three-credit class, this conflicts with guidelines of the National Science Teachers Association. The NSTA says that lab sessions should be an integral part of all introductory science classes, not a separate add-on, and that they should not earn the same credits per hour as lecture and discussion.

“The option of extra hours is good, but for the sciences at least, it isn’t enough to bring us in line with national standards,” said Ford.

Similar issues exist for first-year foreign language instruction. Aránzazu Borrachero, associate professor of Spanish at Queensborough Community College, said her department had chosen to keep first-year courses at four credits, though this meant they could not be part of Pathways requirements. Brooklyn College and other schools have dropped long-standing foreign language requirements because the introductory classes did not fit within Pathways’ credit limits. Art and philosophy have often been left out of Pathways’ limited “buckets” of required subjects, as well, and many faculty say enrollment in these subjects has dropped as a result.

### AN OPENING

“This echoes the effects of ‘education reform,’ on K-12 curriculum, where we have seen ‘frills’ like music and art scaled back or eliminated,” said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant. “What they have in common is a compression of the curriculum, and a narrowing of students’ educational experience.”

Still, Kelly’s February 3 announcement is “a step in right direction,” said Borrachero. “It is not what we want, but it’s still an opening.” The inclusion of faculty governance structures in future decisions, in particular, is a first in the long-running Pathways conflict.

“The lesson to draw is that we must continue to stand up for quality education and faculty governance,” said Bowen. “The administration will never acknowledge it, but the reason for their shift was the 92% vote of no confidence in May. It’s clear that pressure works – we have to keep the pressure on.”



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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# Council changes good for CUNY

● It’s been a long time coming. I have been a PSC political activist for more than 13 years, beginning in 2000, when the New Caucus was elected to the leadership of the PSC. Not only did the leadership of the PSC change after term limits were instituted, but so did the City Council. The PSC legislation committee went to work to elect a grassroots-oriented council. We brought in many allies who became advocates for CUNY, including Gifford Miller, the speaker. However, there was not a chief executive to partner with the council. The union found itself in the position of defending CUNY against Rudy Giuliani’s attacks. When Christine Quinn became council speaker, she aligned herself with Michael Bloomberg and was not as accessible to the union as Miller had been.

With our efforts and those of political activists all over the city, we have achieved the best that we could have hoped for, a progressive mayor and, a progressive speaker of the council, Melissa Mark-Viverito, who has appointed Inez Barron as chair of the Committee on Higher Education. The expectation is that she will be as open to the PSC as her husband Charles Barron was when he chaired the same committee throughout the Bloomberg and Quinn years.

So, the PSC Legislative Committee

is well positioned to advocate for CUNY. But we cannot do it by ourselves. We are 20 strong, but every member of the union should be involved to support Bill de Blasio’s effort to raise taxes on the rich and allocate the funds to CUNY that he promised.

Cecelia McCall  
Baruch College (retired)

*Editor’s note: Readers interested in more information on the PSC Legislative Committee can contact Amanda Magalhaes at [amagalhaes@pscmail.org](mailto:amagalhaes@pscmail.org) or 212-354-1252.*

### Transparency needed in engineering endowment

● In recognition of the pivotal role that City College contributed to his intellectual development, Dr. Andrew Grove (previously CEO of Intel, giant of the information age and a City College 1960 alumnus) endowed CCNY’s School of Engineering with a generous gift of \$26 million. The terms of this gift stipulated that full financial reports on the expenditures from this endowment be prepared annually.

Despite many requests in faculty meetings, no financial report was made available. Recently, concerns mounted when no confirmation was obtained that certain endowment expenditures were actually authorized

by the dean of engineering. As a result, I proceeded, as an individual, with filing a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to obtain these reports. The case had to be appealed to the vice chancellor for legal affairs to ensure the CCNY administration’s compliance with my request. Unfortunately, the reports received were not consolidated, making it impossible to form a true picture of the endowment income and expenditures; furthermore, certain information in the documents did not reconcile with other independent available pieces of information.

Asserting its responsibility under shared governance, the faculty of the school voted in its December 12, 2013, meeting for a resolution requesting that the City College administration provide a complete, consolidated and unambiguous report on the endowment finances ([cny.cuny.edu/eleceng/endowment.cfm](http://cny.cuny.edu/eleceng/endowment.cfm)). As of January 30, 2014, the City College administration has not complied with the faculty resolution.

Two questions:  
Are the causes of transparency and accountability being well-served by the above described practices?

Will this financial opaqueness encourage future potential donors to give?

Jamal Manassah  
City College

## PSC hosts higher ed gathering



Craig Flanery of New Faculty Majority speaks on January 18 at the sixth national gathering of the Campaign for the Future of Higher Education (CFHE), hosted this year by the PSC. CFHE includes labor and academic organizations across the US; for info on its analysis and organizing goals, see [futureofhighered.org](http://futureofhighered.org).

# New chancellor: James Milliken

By PETER HOGNESS

James B. Milliken, president of the University of Nebraska since 2004, has been appointed the new chancellor of the City University of New York. He will take office no later than June 1.

Milliken was selected by a 16-member search committee led by Benno Schmidt, current chair of CUNY's Board of Trustees, and was appointed by a unanimous vote of the trustees on January 15. Names of other finalists were not disclosed.

University of Nebraska faculty were mostly positive in their assessment of Milliken's decade at the helm. "Overall, he's been a good president," said Bob Darcy, professor of English at the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO) and head of the AAUP chapter there, which represents Omaha faculty in collective bargaining. Darcy described Milliken as an effective and thoughtful executive, "not a friend to the union, but not an enemy, either."

"He's an exceptionally competent administrator," said Meredith Bacon, professor of political science and head of the UNO Faculty Senate. "Like everyone else in this profoundly red state, he is a fiscal conservative, but he has won significant budgeting victories with the even more conservative governor and Legislature."

Terrence Martell, chair of CUNY's University Faculty Senate and a member of the search committee, said that Milliken's view of the mission of a public university will serve him well at CUNY. The University of Nebraska "is in many senses materially different from the City University of New York, but on the other hand, we are both about providing opportunity to people who don't have opportunity," Martell said. "He gets that."

Milliken's predecessor, Matthew Goldstein, was described in the January 16 *Wall Street Journal* as "the divisive former CUNY chancellor who stepped down last summer after 14 years." As the *Journal*, *The New York Times* and other media reported, Goldstein's last years were marked by sharp conflict over Pathways, an administration-imposed overhaul of CUNY's curriculum for general education. "The program is opposed by most faculty members, who see it as a way to centralize control of the curriculum and, they contend, cut down on instruction," reported the *Times*.

## NEW START

"The PSC welcomes J.B. Milliken to CUNY," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "We stand ready to work with him as productively as we can," she told the *Wall Street Journal*. Bowen "implored the new chancellor to 'listen to the faculty and respect our knowledge' on the [Pathways] issue," the *Times* reported; a union statement noted the 92% vote of no confidence in Pathways in a referendum among full-time faculty last May.

## Nebraskan takes top CUNY post

"The most important things he can do as chancellor are to support rescinding the Pathways resolution," Bowen told *Clarion*, "and to be aggressive in pursuing an economic settlement of our contract that provides for overdue salary increases and better working conditions." CUNY, she said, is ready for a new direction.

### NEBRASKA BORN

James B. Milliken, known to colleagues as J.B., was born in Fremont, Nebraska, and graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1979. After working as a legislative assistant to Rep. Virginia Smith, a Republican and Nebraska's first woman elected to Congress, Milliken enrolled in law school at New York University, from which he graduated in 1983. After a brief stint with NYC's Legal Aid Society, he moved to Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, a Wall Street law firm where he worked on securities liti-



Julia Schleck, U. of Nebraska-Lincoln

gation. It was an era when "insider trading" and "junk bonds" became familiar terms: the cases Milliken worked on included lawsuits against Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken, according to *Nebraska Magazine*.

Milliken returned to his home state in 1988 when he was hired as executive assistant to the president of the University of Nebraska; he later became the system's vice president for external affairs. It was the start of his career as an academic administrator – not through teaching and research, but as a specialist in external affairs, which first and foremost meant relations with government.

In 1998 Milliken moved from the four-campus University of Nebraska to the 16-campus University of North Carolina, to serve as VP for external affairs in the larger system. In 2004 he returned to the University of Nebraska as its president, the first native Nebraskan and the first NU graduate to hold that position. (NU is the abbreviation used



New CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken

when referring to the Nebraska system as a whole.)

"What J.B. is really good at is not being disliked by very powerful people," said Bacon, the faculty senate president at the University of Nebraska Omaha. "He's really good at working with our governor, who's even more conservative than the Board of Regents. And he's good at making deals with the Legislature."

"Sometimes it's hard to tell what Milliken is blocking," said the AAUP's Darcy. "He ultimately answers to the Board of Regents, which is elected. On some issues it's clear what his own views are, but not always."

As an example of Milliken's deal-making abilities, Bacon cited a recent gain in state funding, in which legislators approved a 4% annual increase in each of two years. "He told the legislature, 'If you give us more state aid, we'll freeze tuition for two years,' and they agreed to it," she told *Clarion*. "It was a heck of an achievement, because the state had not been generous with us." NU's state support had been essentially flat for the previous five years, with tuition increased each year during that time.

"People have generally been impressed at what he's been able to do in a very conservative state," agreed Julia Schleck, an AAUP member and associate professor of English at NU's Lincoln campus.

### AFFORDABILITY & DIVERSITY

During Milliken's term as president of University of Nebraska, he has often said that college affordability is "our top priority," and NU faculty say he has followed this up with action. "He's been pretty hardline on tuition," commented Darcy. "He's kept it low."

(Tuition rates in the NU vary by campus; typical in-state undergraduate tuition could vary from around \$5,200 to \$6,500 per year, depending on the campus and number of credit-hours, plus about \$1,500 in fees.)

Milliken has also moved to increase need-based financial aid. He

"launched and expanded Collegebound Nebraska, which promises free tuition to all Pell grant-eligible Nebraska residents," according to the *Omaha World-Herald*. The program now includes about 7,000 students, or "almost one-quarter of Nebraska undergraduates at the university," according to NU. (Out-of-state and international students and those in graduate programs bring NU's total enrollment to about 50,000, compared to 270,000 at CUNY.)

Milliken led the NU administration in speaking out against a 2008 state ballot referendum banning affirmative action in admissions and hiring, which was backed by former University of California Regent Ward Connerly. "If we are to prepare our students to be successful in a global economy, we should offer an educational environment that reflects the diversity of the world," Milliken argued. The ballot measure passed, but requirements attached to the use of federal funds have left NU with some flexibility in this arena.

As president, Milliken was also vocal in the defense of a Nebraska law that provides for undocumented immigrant students who reside in the state to pay in-state tuition



Roger Davis, U. of Nebraska-Omaha

rates. Nebraska will advance "only by making higher education more accessible – not by closing the doors on students who are able and want to pursue a degree," he wrote to legislators in 2011. That bill was defeated, and the in-state tuition law remains on the books. (New York has had a similar law since 2002, the result of organizing by a coalition that included the PSC.)

In 2012, Milliken successfully lobbied the University of Nebraska's regents to extend benefits such as health insurance to unmarried partners of NU employees. (Unlike CUNY's trustees, who are appointed by the governor and mayor, NU's regents are elected by Nebraska's voters.) In prior years, the regents had resisted the idea. But when University of Nebraska-Lincoln entered the Big 10, "there was some pres-

sure from that corner to allow for domestic partner benefits," Darcy told *Clarion*. Since Nebraska's constitution has banned state recognition of civil unions or domestic partnerships since 2000, Milliken proposed a plan to allow NU employees to get benefits coverage for one other adult who is a long-term part of their household, which he dubbed the "Plus One" program; it was adopted by the regents on a 5-3 vote.

Bacon told *Clarion* that Milliken's commitment to diversity has been a consistent part of his role at NU. "During my first incarnation as Faculty Senate president, I was Walter, and during this tenure I am Meredith," said Bacon, who has served as board chair of the National Center for Transgender Equality. "There was not even a hiccup in our relations." That was not the case with all members of the Board of Regents, she added: "A couple of them still will not acknowledge me."

### INDUSTRIAL & MILITARY COMPLEXES

As president, Milliken has aggressively pursued partnerships with both private corporations and the military.

One of the largest of NU's "public/private partnerships" is the new Nebraska Innovation Campus (NIC) under construction across from the Lincoln campus, being built with \$25 million in additional state funds. The NIC is billed as a place "where university and private sector talent connect to transform ideas into innovation," with university research labs and corporate offices side-by-side. Processed food giant ConAgra, known for brands from Slim Jim to Swiss Miss to Hebrew National, will be a major tenant. "We're enthusiastic about this announcement, which really represents an extension of the relationship we've been fostering with the university for several years," said Al Bolles, a ConAgra VP, in 2012.

In 2012, the University of Nebraska also announced that it had been selected by the Pentagon as the site for a University-Affiliated Research Center (UARC), an \$84 million partnership with the US Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base, which is located near Omaha. NU's selection "as one of only 14 universities nationwide to host a UARC provides tremendous opportunities for Nebraska," Milliken told the State Legislature in March 2013. Other schools hosting UARCs include Penn State, Johns Hopkins and MIT. At NU, plans call for research to focus on "nuclear detection and forensics, detection of chemical and biological weapons [and] passive defense against weapons of mass destruction," as well as space, cyber and telecommunications law. The UARC is part of the University of Nebraska's new National Strategic Research Institute, headed by retired US Air Force Lt. General Robert Hinson.

Last June, Milliken was criticized by Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman for his role on the corporate board of Nebraska-based Valmont Industries, a manufacturer of irrigation equipment and utility poles. According to the *Omaha World-Herald*, Milliken was likely to re-

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# Queens temperature problems

By **BEN CHITTY**  
Queens College PSC  
Chapter Executive Committee

All last summer and into the fall, and now in the dead of winter, the weather has stressed and strained facilities at Queens College (QC) – not to mention students, staff and faculty. Failures of campus cooling and heating systems have damaged musical instruments and specimen collections, disrupted scientific experiments and created conditions unhealthy for staff, disruptive to scholarship and detrimental to teaching and learning. Last summer's extreme heat waves and record-breaking cold snaps this winter are likely to become the new normal, thanks to climate change. Since the Queens College administration has failed to effectively respond, the campus PSC chapter had to amplify its efforts to move the college to act more responsibly and humanely to address these issues.

## UNDERFUNDING & NEGLECT

We already know that many buildings on campus are poorly designed, whether out of incompetence, false economies or irresponsible college oversight. We already know that maintenance at the college has been neglected, principally by underfunding and understaffing. We already know that climate change is bringing more extreme weather. The college administration cannot do much about climate change, but smart and effective responses cannot be out of reach.

One of the consequences of climate change is that hot weather arrives earlier and earlier. The summer's first heat wave arrived during the "shoulder" season, before central cooling systems are expected to operate. When the college tested systems in several buildings, the chillers failed to work. This left most of the Music Building and all of the Benjamin Rosenthal Library to swelter. In the Music Building, the high humidity, which accompanied the heat, warped instruments – an organ worth over a half-million dollars could not be tuned. In the Rosenthal Library, temperatures in the Second Floor Commons – open 24 hours a day for students to study during final exams – varied between 86 and 90 degrees.

## FEELING THE HEAT

According to the college administration, University regulations and City ordinances prohibit the operation of central cooling systems before the official cooling season. The PSC chapter regards the college as legally and morally obligated to maintain a safe and healthy work environment at all times, regardless of policies implemented decades ago.

Moreover, some problems have been unnecessarily compounded by management failures. For ex-

## Employee health gets cold shoulder



This winter's bitter cold has impacted several buildings at Queens College.

ample, one of the two chillers for Delany Hall was damaged during Hurricane Sandy, but the college did not begin repairs until after the 2013 cooling season had already started.

During the summer's second heat wave in late June, two more QC buildings (Powdermaker and Klapper Halls) were left without cooling. Then one of Razran Hall's chillers failed, ending some science experiments. All summer long the Science Building suffered sporadic electrical outages, leaks and inside temperatures in the 80s and 90s. Even when broken chillers went back online, ventilation systems often failed to get cool air into many offices and classrooms.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cooling problems continued into Fall semester. The Kiely Hall chiller failed in August and repairs were not completed for a month, into the second week of the Fall semester. The industrial fans brought into classrooms made so much noise that students could not hear teachers, and, worse, teachers could not hear students.

Once the weather turned bitterly cold, new problems quickly emerged. Razran Hall's heating system failed in January, again threatening scientific research. Three weeks later, with heat still not getting to all offices, the condensate pumps stopped working. Meanwhile, the annual deep freeze in Powdermaker Hall has brought out herds of space heaters, which are neither safe nor adequate to compensate for the decision not to

distribute heating to many interior rooms.

For years, the union asked the college to review its response to extreme temperature conditions:

- We identified difficulties with the work request tracking system. The college implemented an Archibus facilities management system, but it does not accurately track work orders, much less provide ready and transparent access to the status of requests and repairs, or monitor building conditions.

- We asked the college to improve communication to staff and faculty about infrastructure problems and failures, as well as hazards to safety and health. The vice president for finance and administration maintained the college could not agree because it lacked email addresses for building residents. Of course the claim was counterfactual, and the college began last summer to send email notices to departments for some asbestos abatement projects and some major ventilation system failures (though distribution has sometimes been incomplete, and the reports not always accurate).

- We urged the college to revisit decades-old policies that define extreme heat conditions, especially whether a building is considered air-conditioned, and whether heat waves require changes in work hours or locations. We presented suggestions to the provost and the chief superintendent in 2011, who forwarded them to the vice president.

- We recommended that when extreme weather is predicted, the

college should monitor buildings with failed or failing ventilation systems so that staff could be relocated and operations reduced in an orderly fashion while the college kept its contractual and moral commitment to provide a safe and healthy workplace.

## Extreme weather stresses faulty facilities.

Late last April, the union wrote the acting provost about its concern that the college still had no procedure for responding to extreme heat conditions in classrooms. In May, we

asked to meet with the president to discuss the problems in the Music Building and Rosenthal. At the end of June, after the cooling system failures during the first summer heat wave, the acting provost finally replied that these matters would be handled by the new vice president for finance and administration, due to start the middle of July, and the president agreed to meet with the union on July 22.

## PERSISTENCE

At that meeting, chairs from various departments described – in person and in writing – the effects of extreme heat and high humidity on conditions of teaching and learning, instruments and equipment, laboratory experiments and staff morale. The union presented a proposal based on the one first submitted in 2011. The vice president agreed the college might try to monitor building conditions more thoroughly.

Following up on that meeting, the union asked the college to begin immediately conducting a campus-wide survey of humidity issues and

to develop policies and procedures for responding to extreme heat conditions in classrooms, labs and offices. The union stressed especially the urgency of providing clear directions for instructors who arrive to find their assigned classroom or lab unfit for use. Three days later, the Queens College general counsel wrote that, "We are reviewing the concerns and proposals, and will get back to you."

When the Kiely Hall chiller failure turned into a crisis at the beginning of the Fall semester, the union asked again to discuss the situation with the president, but got no response. When the union raised the issue at the September college Personnel & Budget meeting, the president suggested we submit a proposal. The union sent him another copy of the proposal submitted in July.

At the October labor-management meeting – the last of that president's tenure – the vice president sketched an ambitious plan to centralize cooling on campus and promised that next summer, teachers could call a number to get their classes moved out of sweltering rooms.

However, we need a more comprehensive approach. PSC members have made a number of helpful suggestions.

First, the college is not yet able to track heating, cooling and ventilation problems, much less address them. The PSC can help. It has started to compile an inventory of problem areas and will ask the administration how it assesses and plans to remedy these conditions, building by building or even room by room. Members can keep an eye out and check on areas known to be vulnerable when extreme weather is forecast.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Second, the president and his administrative team have, for many years, answered only to the university chancellor and not to the faculty, staff and students of Queens College. They have failed to maintain an environment conducive to learning and teaching. They have failed to provide a safe and healthy workplace. They have failed to deploy scarce public resources wisely and responsibly. The PSC can make sure these failures are more widely advertised to the citizens of New York and to the politicians who represent their interests.

We can make it harder for the administration to continue to fail to be responsive and accountable to the thousands of people who work and study at QC.

*This is an updated version of an article published in the last issue of the QC Catalyst, the newsletter of the QC PSC chapter.*

*If you have temperature problems on your campus, contact the PSC Health & Safety Watchdogs at [hswatchdogs@pscmail.org](mailto:hswatchdogs@pscmail.org).*

# Exploring black literature

By JOHN TARLETON

For 10 years, the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College (MEC) has been host to the biannual National Black Writers Conference (NBWC). Brenda Greene, the center's executive director, says they share a mission of expansion and inclusion.

"We are expanding the master narrative of who is considered to be essential reading," she told *Clarion*. "There's not enough known about the broad range of literature produced by black writers."

## MARCH 27-30

Held biannually since 2000, the National Black Writers Conference features writers from across the worldwide African diaspora. This year's gathering will take place March 27-30 and participants will include Nobel laureate Derek Walcott, crime fiction writer Walter Mosley and the poet and editor Quincy Troupe. French-language historical novelist Maryse Condé and the late Margaret Burroughs, co-founder of Chicago's DuSable Museum of African American History, will be honored as well. It all happens the weekend that the Center for Black Literature celebrates its 10th anniversary.

The work of these writers will be a major theme as faculty, independent

## MEC to host writers' gathering



At the 2011 National Black Writers Conference: (seated, left to right) Sonia Sanchez, Toni Morrison, Kamau Brathwaite and Amiri Baraka. (Standing, left to right) Richard Jones, Susan Taylor, Marcia White, Brenda Greene and Cornel West.

scholars and students present papers at this year's conference, the 12th since it was first organized in 1986.

Panels and roundtable topics include the state of poetry from an African-American perspective; science fiction and fantasy; shifting identities in Africa and the African diaspora; the state of publishing in 2014; and a contemporary look at historical narrative. Several workshops will also be offered on cre-

ative nonfiction, how to put together a book proposal and more. Writers, academics and lovers of literature are all welcome, says Greene. The last conference drew 1,600 people, including 500 young people from grades three through twelve.

### 'IT'S A CONVERSATION'

"It's a conversation. It's a dialogue," emphasizes Greene. Writers at the event know to "check their

egos at the door," she said, because the emphasis is on interaction and creating an event that is accessible to a wide range of participants.

On March 29, the Center for Black Literature will celebrate its 10th anniversary at a gala that is open to the public, as well as at a private reception.

In addition to staging the National Black Writers Conference, the center also works extensively with local public schools and with institutions like the Brooklyn Public Library and the Schomburg Center to promote interest in black literature.

For Greene, who grew up reading the likes of Emily Dickinson and the Brontë sisters, literature has always been something she loved. However, she was not exposed to black writers until she won a scholarship to attend New York University during the late 1960s and became active in the Black Arts Movement, which included writers such as Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, Haki Madhubuti, Quincy Troupe and others. The experience of having been cut off from African-American cultural heritage during most of her education inspired Greene's future work.

"I made a conscious decision to not have students go through what I went through," said Greene, who

began teaching at Medgar Evers in 1980 and helped organize the first National Black Writers Conference in 1986 with the novelist John Oliver Killens.

Killens died of cancer in 1987, but the conferences continued in 1988, 1991, 1996, 2000 and 2002 before settling into a regular biannual schedule under the aegis of the Center for Black Literature.

### PRE-CONFERENCE

This year's conference will be preceded by several noteworthy events. On February 19, at the CUNY Graduate Center, Columbia professor Farah Jasmine Griffin will discuss her new book on women artists in Harlem during World War

### Authors will be featured from across the African diaspora.

II with Robert Reid-Pharr, distinguished professor of English and American Studies and director of the Graduate Center's Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC). At MEC, there will be a NBWC Youth Day Program on March 21, and a symposium on the poet Audre Lorde on March 22.

While MEC provides a home for the NBWC (and admission for MEC students is free), Greene emphasized that the literary feast offered by the National Black Writers Conference isn't just for Medgar Evers faculty, staff and students.

"We want people to know this is a conference for everyone," Greene said. "And we really want people from across CUNY to come."

## LIFE/WORK

# Make movies, change the world

By JOHN TARLETON

Documentary filmmaking has flourished in the past 20 years – and Kelly Anderson, associate professor of film and media studies at Hunter College, has done her part to make that happen. Director and producer, teacher and mentor, Anderson has made award-winning films that tackle controversial themes such as workplace discrimination against LGBT people (*Out at Work*, 1997) and NYPD police shootings (*Every Mother's Son*, 2004), both of which she produced with a fellow professor of film and media studies at Hunter, Tami Gold. Anderson most recently teamed up with Hunter graduate student Allison Lirish Dean and others to create *My Brooklyn* (2013), which explores Brooklyn's rapid gentrification and its roots in discriminatory policies sanctioned by the federal government. *My Brooklyn* debuted on television January 14 as part of the PBS World series *America ReFramed*.

### Why I made *My Brooklyn*

What's going on now with gentrification is, at least in part, another step in a historical pattern of uprooting people to see how much money you can make. We wanted to demystify the process of how neighborhoods

change so people can address the deeper roots of this problem.

### Hunter students and *My Brooklyn*

It was a super-collaborative project. The film's associate producer was a graduate assistant who handled sound recording, animation and graphic design. Undergraduates served as production assistants who helped with equipment and ran errands as needed. They got a chance to see how a movie is made.

### My approach to documentary

My films have a strong point of view, but I don't beat people over the head with it for an hour and a half. The key to a good interview is listening. A lot of students go in with a list of questions – but you have to listen closely to the answers to find the keys to a deeper understanding.

### Why documentaries are booming

The cost of making a documentary has gone way down. I think the interest in documentaries is a reflection of people's loss of faith in the idea that there is a single reliable "truth" that you can get from the mainstream media. There's a greater understanding that you have to seek out alternate points of view, which speaks well of people's increased sophistication.



Documentary filmmaker Kelly Anderson

### Media and Urban Studies

I co-teach a course with Tom Angotti, who's a professor of urban affairs and planning, called "Community Media, Advocacy & the Urban Environment." Media students come together with urban studies students to learn how to use media for advocacy and to improve the quality of life in specific New York City neighborhoods. In a previous class, our students exposed preda-

tory landlords in East New York and the story made *The New York Times*.

### Headed to the Rockaways

This semester we're going to focus on the Rockaways, a part of the city particularly hard hit by Hurricane Sandy. There's a group there called The Wildfire Project that has done some interesting organizing. It has the promise to bring together some groups that historically have been divided by race and class. As the city looks to move ahead with a major redevelopment plan called Arverne East, there's a chance for residents to obtain a strong Community Benefits Agreement. We're going to look at how media can have a positive impact as a community articulates its needs and its wants.

### What I love about teaching at CUNY

I love the diversity of the students and their attitudes. They come with a tremendous hunger to learn and very little sense of entitlement. I also like teaching in a public institution. It fits my values, even though it's always a struggle to get the resources and the funding we should have.

### Out at Work

In this documentary, Tami Gold and I follow a cook, an auto worker

and a librarian who face harassment and discrimination because of their sexual orientation. When she and I made the film in 1997, you could be fired from your job for being gay in more than 40 states. At that time, there was also an explosion of gay and lesbian organizing and pride caucuses in unions. Our film was used extensively by organizers and it has had a lot of impact.

### 15 years after Amadou Diallo

Tami and I made *Every Mother's Son* after the police shooting of Amadou Diallo, an unarmed young man shot dead by the police with 41 bullets. We followed the story of three mothers whose sons were killed by the NYPD and connected these shootings to larger policies that began under Rudy Giuliani, cordoning off whole neighborhoods and allowing the stopping and frisking of any young man of color in the area. To now see the end of this stop-and-frisk era is really hopeful. It was a long time coming.

### My latest project

With my colleagues Marty Lucas and Mick Hurbis-Cherrie, I'm working on a book about how to make a documentary film. The title will be *Documentary Voice & Vision*, and it's due out in Fall 2015. It builds on the introductory class that Marty and I have taught for over a decade. It's going to be a big, thorough book, strong on both the technical and conceptual aspects of making a movie.

# Reformers urge TAP changes

By JOHN TARLETON

The State of New York created the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) in 1974 to provide needs-based aid to the State's college students. In the 40 years since, TAP has helped 4 million New Yorkers pursue higher education. But a new statewide coalition says that too many of today's college students are not well served by TAP, and that the program is due for an update. Looking to build on TAP's past success, the coalition is advancing several related proposals for reform.

The Coalition to Reform the NY Tuition Assistance Program includes the PSC, CUNY's University Student Senate, the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), New York Students Rising, the NY State Youth Leadership Council, United University Professions (the PSC's counterpart at SUNY), SEIU 32BJ, the New York State School Counselor Association, CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities, and a number of other student, community, labor and professional organizations. While not members of the coalition, the CUNY and SUNY administrations have issued reports on TAP that identify areas for potential reform.

## LOTS OF ALLIES

Advocates say the program now falls short for hundreds of thousands of students, often thwarting the ability of low-income individuals to get a college education.

TAP assists more than 300,000 college students in New York every year, including 75,000 at CUNY. However, many students who badly need financial help go unserved because of rules designed with "traditional" college students in mind: those who go to college full-time straight from high school, expect to graduate in four years, and are financially dependent on their parents.

"There's a lot to change in regard to TAP," said Gail Baksh-Jarrett, senior director of Enrollment

## Adjunct pay dates

The first pay date this semester for adjuncts teaching at senior colleges was February 20. For adjuncts teaching at all community colleges except KCC, LAGCC and Guttman CC, the first pay date was February 14. If you did not get paid, contact your campus payroll office. You are entitled to receive an advance on wages owed without difficulties or delay.

If you are refused an advance or do not receive your missing pay on the next pay date, contact your chapter chair, as well as an adjunct grievance counselor at the PSC office (212-354-1252). The second and third adjunct pay dates at senior colleges this semester are March 6 and March 20. For community colleges (except KCC, LAGCC and Guttman CC), the second and third pay dates are February 28 and March 14. **-JT**

## Outdated rules penalize many students



Jaritza Geigel, a 23-year-old freshman at LaGuardia Community College, lives on her own, earns more than \$15,000 per year and is not eligible for financial aid from TAP.

and Student Financial Services at LaGuardia Community College. "There needs to be some relevance to current economic times."

TAP falls short for today's college students, especially at CUNY and SUNY, in several ways.

First, its rules stack the deck against students who have work or family obligations that keep them from going to school full-time. TAP recipients must have been full-time students for at least one year before they can qualify for potential assistance, from a very limited pool of funds, as a student enrolled part-time. As a result of this and other regulations, fewer than 100 of 83,000 part-time CUNY students received part-time TAP awards in 2011.

According to Warren Soare, director of the Brooklyn College SEEK program, which provides comprehensive academic support to 850 low-income students who depend on TAP and Pell grants to cover college expenses, students often sign up for a full-time course load in order to qualify for TAP money when they ought to be going to school part-time. "There are times when they should be enrolling for six hours instead of 12," Soare told *Clarion*. "Sometimes they aren't able to handle a full schedule and don't do well academically."

Students who are single, have no children and are financially independent of their parents are disqualified from receiving TAP money if they earn more than \$15,000 per year, even if they live independently of their parents.

"We need equity between dependent and independent students,"

Baksh-Jarrett told *Clarion*. "That would be my number one priority."

The TAP coalition is calling on the State to lift the cap on what independent earners can make to \$35,000 per year, and to increase their maximum award to the same amount as that for married students and single students with children.

## OUT OF POCKET

For Jaritza Geigel, a 23-year-old freshman at LaGuardia who works 30 hours a week, reforming TAP to better serve students who are financially on their own couldn't come too soon. "I really can't afford to pay out of pocket what I'm paying," Geigel said of her \$4,200 in annual tuition. Each month she juggles rent and bills while making payments on a student loan from a previous foray into college. Her income barely covers her monthly expenses, and being ineligible for TAP makes it much more difficult to get by.

Geigel is seeking a degree in communications while she works as an organizer with Make the Road New York, an immigrant-led group that works to empower low-income New Yorkers and which is part of the push for TAP reform. "[Lawmakers] need to figure out how to fix this," she told *Clarion*. "They're not taking into account how much it costs to live."

Students are also hobbled by a rule that cuts off TAP funding for most students after eight semesters, forcing many of them to take out student loans to finish their studies. The coalition is calling for the State to extend an extra two semesters of TAP eligibility to students who are identified as educationally disadvantaged

"That was pure luck," says Fitten, who would like to continue on to a four-year college at CUNY or elsewhere but currently lacks the funds to do so.

CUNY, the PSC and a number of other TAP coalition partners are calling for passage of the New York State DREAM Act, legislation that would make TAP money available to undocumented New Yorkers pursuing college study. Supporters have urged the legislature to enact this reform for several years; this year, they say, it has an improved chance of passage.

## 'MANY OBSTACLES'

"This is supposed to be the land of opportunity, yet there are so many obstacles and barriers put up in the way of getting an education," commented Fitten.

A basic problem with TAP today is that its awards have not kept pace with rising tuition. The maximum award of \$5,000 per year has remained unchanged since 2001, with a one-third drop in real value due to inflation. During that time, tuition for a full-time CUNY senior college student has climbed to \$5,730 per year and is set to increase by an additional \$300 every year through 2016, for an eventual total of \$6,330.

The 2011 State law that mandated the current wave of annual tuition increases also requires CUNY to make up the difference between the top TAP award and the cost of tuition out of its operating budget. Filling this gap will cost CUNY \$42 million in 2014-2015, money that is taken away from CUNY's other pressing needs.

The coalition is seeking to increase the maximum TAP award to \$6,500 per year, and proportionately increase other award schedules as well. The cost of phasing in these increases over five years is estimated at \$229 million. It would be money well spent, said Soare.

"Money that's invested in the TAP program comes back to New York as most graduates stay in New York and become productive citizens and taxpayers," Soare said.

Albany's austerity budgets in recent years have inflicted cuts to TAP that the coalition is seeking to reverse, such as an across-the-board \$100 per year reduction in TAP awards for students in their final two years of school, or the elimination of TAP funding for graduate students.

TAP reformers also say the program could be made more efficient by simplifying the rules and regulations and improving TAP administration. For example, the State currently has seven categories of awards which the coalition says could be consolidated into four categories.

For Baksh-Jarrett, one easy step would be to eliminate the requirement for filling out paperwork on family income, which she describes as "confusing" for many applicants. The State already has the information it needs via the tax returns it receives, she points out.

It's one of many ways, she observes, TAP would benefit from being brought into the 21st century. "There are so many areas where there can be improvements," Baksh-Jarrett said. "Reforming this program is going to be good for students."



Warren Soare, director of the Brooklyn College SEEK program.

by the State but are not enrolled in New York's limited equal opportunity programs (SEEK, College Discovery, and HEOP, which already extend TAP for two additional semesters).

Undocumented immigrant students are also seeking TAP reform. CUNY has more than 6,500 undocumented immigrant students like Teonia Fitten who are not eligible for either federal or New York State financial assistance. Fitten's parents brought her to the US from Jamaica when she was 10 years old. Now a sophomore at Bronx Community College, she is slated to graduate later this spring with an associate degree, thanks in part to a privately funded scholarship she received through the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) initiative.

Neima Green (first published on BCLNPR.com)

Dave Sanders

# PSC seeks CUNY budget boost

By CLARION STAFF

Governor Andrew Cuomo's January 21 budget proposal promises more than \$2 billion in tax cuts, reducing corporate taxes across the board and giving an extra tax benefit to Wall Street banks. But the governor's proposal fails to fund nearly \$50 million of CUNY's mandatory cost increases for heat, electricity, building rentals and more – just one of the many spending cuts that the proposed tax cuts require.

At an Albany budget hearing on February 6, PSC President Barbara Bowen noted that “the State promised to maintain the base budget for CUNY” when five years of tuition hikes were approved in 2011. The governor's proposed budget, she said, fails to meet that promise.

“If CUNY's mandatory needs are left unmet and tuition is used to fill the gap, the tuition hikes are no more than a tax – a regressive tax that will force poor and middle-income students to pay an ever-increasing share of the cost of operating CUNY, while corporations and the wealthy receive tax breaks,” Bowen said.

## PSC IN ACTION

In their testimony at the hearing, Bowen and PSC First Vice President Steve London asked legislators to add \$49.5 million to Cuomo's proposed CUNY funding, to fully cover CUNY's mandatory cost increases.

## Cuomo tax cuts don't add up

The union's 2014 budget analysis (available at [tinyurl.com/PSC-2014-Budget-Book](http://tinyurl.com/PSC-2014-Budget-Book)) argues that “New York has an inequality crisis. CUNY is the solution.”

“People go to CUNY because they want to change their lives,” Bowen testified. “We help them by providing skills – not just job skills or STEM skills, but critical thinking skills, writing skills and skills of reimagination.”

In addition to full funding for CUNY's unmet mandatory needs, the PSC is calling for a \$40 million investment in new full-time faculty lines, and restoration of State base aid for community colleges to its 2008-09 level (an additional \$19.5 million). The union is also asking the legislature to reform and expand financial aid (see page 4) and restore funding to opportunity programs like SEEK and College Discovery, and to CUNY's widely praised ASAP (Accelerated Study in Associate Programs) initiative.

In tandem with the PSC's push for immediate funding increases, the union's statewide affiliate, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), has launched a sustained campaign to end the chronic underfunding of CUNY and SUNY, which has seen State support for the two systems cut by nearly \$2 billion over the last five years. Dubbed “Keep New York

a State of Mind,” NYSUT's campaign calls for additional State investment to reverse years of disinvestment, with an expansion of opportunity programs and student financial aid. It includes an innovative plan for creation of an endowment to fund new full-time lines in the CUNY and SUNY systems. Print advertisements

in support of the campaign began in January, with radio ads slated to start on February 24.

A key fight this year in Albany, which is shaping the entire budget battle, is Mayor Bill de Blasio's push to allow New York City to raise income taxes on residents' incomes above \$500,000, to fund full-day universal prekindergarten classes and after-school middle school programs in NYC. The PSC Delegate Assem-

bly has endorsed the plan, and has pledged to mobilize union members and CUNY students to support it.

Governor Cuomo has said that New York can pay for statewide universal pre-K without taxing the rich – but observers say his numbers don't add up. Cuomo's plan would gradually increase pre-K funding to \$500 million five years from now. But State Education Commissioner John King testified that statewide full-day pre-K would cost closer to \$1.6 billion a year. The latter amount is more in line with de Blasio's plan, which puts the annual cost at \$340 million for New York City alone.

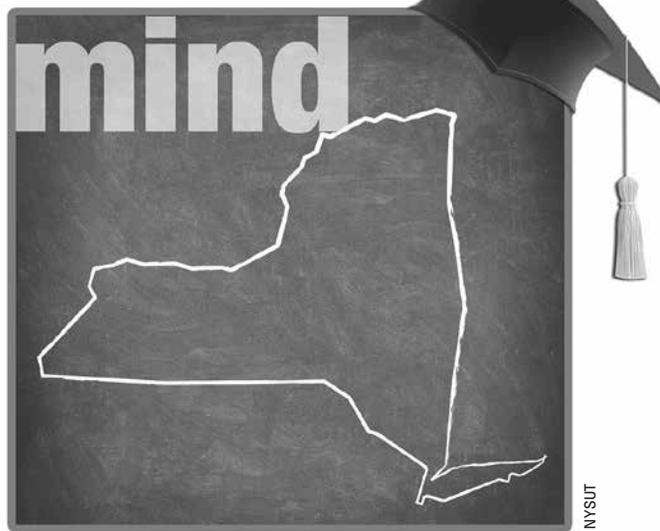
## 'MAGIC FOOTNOTE'

Beyond pre-K, analysts on both the left and the right noted that Cuomo's budget does not specify how his proposed tax cuts would be paid for. The governor says the cost will be covered by a future budget surplus – the result of unspecified budget cuts in future years. A *New York Times* report dubbed this “the magic footnote,” citing several budget analysts who took the same view.

“These proposed tax cuts for the big banks and others are based on a plan for austerity budgets long into the future,” said London. “That is not what voters want. New Yorkers want an end to austerity – and PSC members are organizing to demand it.”

To get involved in the PSC's budget campaign, contact Amanda Magalhaes at [amagalhaes@psc-mail.org](mailto:amagalhaes@psc-mail.org), or (212) 354-1252.

## Keep New York a state of mind



NYSUT's campaign to reverse years of disinvestment.

# Albany alert: academic freedom at risk

By PETER HOGNESS

A New York Assembly bill widely seen as an unconstitutional threat to academic freedom was withdrawn from the agenda of the Assembly Higher Education Committee on February 3, after legislators received a torrent of calls from PSC members and others. The bill was introduced in a revised form a few days later, and academic and civil liberties organizations have vowed to continue their fight against it.

First introduced in January, the legislation A.8392 aimed to cut off all State funding to any New York college or university that pays the expenses for participation in any “academic institutions that are boycotting a country or higher education institutions of a country,” the bill's sponsors said. A similar measure was rushed through the New York State Senate without public discussion; backers of both bills said they were proposed in response to the American Studies Association's December endorsement of a boycott of Israeli academic institutions over what the ASA termed violations of international law in the occupied Palestinian territories.

## In First Amendment fight

In an editorial titled, “A Chill on Speech,” *The New York Times* called A.8392 “an ill-considered response to the ASA resolution” that would “trample on academic freedoms,” and urged that it be rejected. “Academics are rightly concerned that it would impose a political test on faculty members seeking university support for research meetings and travel,” said the *Times*.

## BROAD OPPOSITION

Other opponents of the legislation included the PSC, the CUNY administration, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), NY State United Teachers (NYSUT), Center for Constitutional Rights, New York Civil Liberties Union, SUNY's United University Professions, CUNY's University Faculty Senate executive committee, and various Jewish and Palestinian organizations.

“The enactment of this legislation would serve to regulate speech based on content and the message it conveys,” warned NYSUT, the PSC's state affiliate. For that rea-

son, A.8392 “violates the principles of academic freedom, the First Amendment protection of speech and protection of association,” NYSUT said.

“Academic freedom is meaningless if it does not protect those who hold unpopular positions, including those who advocate academic boycotts,” argued a resolution approved by PSC delegates on January 30. The statement noted that PSC members have a range of deeply held views on the Israel-Palestine conflict and on academic boycotts more generally. “We stand together, however, in opposing legislation that would subject New York State funding for colleges and universities to this political litmus test,” the delegates declared.

A national bill similar to the original New York legislation appears to be going nowhere. “Two major Jewish groups – The American Israel Public Affairs Committee and the Anti-Defamation League – are not planning to back a bill in Congress that would withhold federal funding from American academic

entities that boycott Israel,” said a February 7 *New York Times* report.

In New York, the wave of protest resulted in withdrawal of the original bill just before scheduled committee action. “Due to the large number of comments, which raised a number of concerns, the bill was removed from the Higher Education Committee agenda for further consideration,” assembly member Deborah Glick, the committee's chair and a co-sponsor of the legislation, said in a statement.

The bill's new version, A.8392-A, still bans use of State funds for the same types of academic activities. But if the ban is violated, the bill would no longer trigger a total cutoff of funds: instead, “it would subtract from those schools only the amount of State support” spent on the banned activities.

## SAME BASIC PROBLEM

But the PSC and other groups opposing the original bill said the new version has the same basic problem. As the NYSUT statement emphasized, “the denial of government funding to suppress speech” is an act that “violates the First Amend-

ment.” That is still true of the revised legislation, opponents said. “The attempt to withhold any amount of State funding is a direct assault on our constitutionally protected right to free speech [and] an attempt to punish the exercise of academic freedom,” said a statement from the PSC's Brooklyn College chapter.

The conflict in Albany comes less than a year after an unsuccessful effort by some NYC politicians to

**To punish ASA's Israel boycott stance, CUNY funding is threatened.**

cut off funds to Brooklyn College after it allowed a student forum, co-sponsored by the political science department, on the movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions toward Israel. “I'm a big supporter of Israel,” commented then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg. “But I could also not agree more strongly with an academic department's right to sponsor a forum on any topic that they choose. If you want to go to a university where the government decides what kind of subjects are fit for discussion, I suggest you apply to a school in North Korea.”

Academic and civil liberties groups are continuing to mobilize against the revised bill in Albany, for which the legislative calendar is uncertain. For information on the PSC's organizing against A.8392-A, see [tinyurl.com/Albany-vs-AcadFree2014](http://tinyurl.com/Albany-vs-AcadFree2014).

# Milliken named chancellor

Continued from page 3

ceive \$230,000 in compensation for his service on Valmont's board in 2013, with \$130,000 of that as a stock award. Heineman said that while he thinks Milliken "is doing an outstanding job," he was concerned that his Valmont duties would be a distraction from Milliken's work as NU president.

"The governor and I will apparently have to agree to disagree," Milliken told the *World-Herald*. He said that he avoids conflict using vacation time from the university to take care of his Valmont work, and that his service on the board benefits the university in many ways.

A 2011 vote by NU's regents had given Milliken permission to join the board of a public company, though neither the name of the company nor his compensation were disclosed at the time.

Milliken's salary at the University of Nebraska was \$431,276, according to the *World-Journal*, plus \$230,000 in deferred compensation and retirement contributions. At CUNY his total compensation will be \$670,000, according to *The New York Times*.

## GLOBAL OUTLOOK

NU has a significant international presence, with collaborative programs with academic institutions in China, India, Zambia and elsewhere around the world. Milliken has viewed these projects as a priority, describing them as central to the university's mission. He has also worked to expand the number of international students enrolled at NU, and has represented the United States at a number of international conferences on higher education.

"Few things are more important for students at the University of Nebraska, and students throughout the world, than global literacy – a balanced and thoughtful understanding of cultures and politics around

the world," Milliken said in 2006. "Through language study and foreign exchanges, and also by welcoming students and scholars from other countries to our campuses, our students and faculty are taking critical steps toward competing and thriving in a rapidly changing world."

## ONLINE INITIATIVE

This international focus also found expression in the first of three university-wide institutes that Milliken has launched in recent years, the Daugherty Water for Food Institute, which is focused on water resources and agriculture around the world. The institute's board includes Jeff Raikes, CEO of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a Nebraska native who has praised Milliken's work as NU president.

Founded in 2010, the Daugherty Water for Food Institute is named after Robert Daugherty, founder of Valmont Industries, and the institute's website describes Valmont as "the most successful irrigation company in the world." Milliken followed its launch with the creation of the Buffett Early Childhood Institute in 2011 and the Rural Futures Institute in 2012.

In recent years Milliken has overseen a dramatic expansion of NU's online course offerings and degree programs – and its progress illustrates his approach to working with university faculty. "The university now...has over 130 degree and certificate programs completely online," Milliken said in an interview on "Halftime with President Milliken," a paid radio spot that airs during UNL football games. The all-online offerings include master's degree programs in political science, sociology and other disciplines.

"That's really been Milliken's initiative, and faculty have been offered tremendous incentives to do it," said Darcy. Faculty involve-

ment in online education "is entirely elective," he told *Clarion*. "No one is forced or pressured to do it – it's the carrot without the stick." Faculty members receive additional pay for the additional work of designing and teaching a new online course; those interested faculty apply for a grant from a university center on online instruction. While the exact amounts vary, he said, this might typically total about \$2,500 for a new course: about half to develop the course and about half to teach it for the first time. "The general attitude [of the administration] is that if you want to do the work, we'll pay you to do it," Darcy said.

In addition to these stipends, a large share of the fees from each online course are now returned to the department's budget, supporting travel, research or other uses at the discretion of the department chair. "Our departmental budgets are inadequate," said the UNO Faculty Senate's Bacon. "So any way we can expand those budgets, we grab it."

Both Darcy and Bacon said that online courses have been generally more expensive to offer than classroom courses, and it is unclear how long NU will continue these financial supports for online instruction. "It's only in the last few years that so much of the money has come back to departments," said UNL's Schleck. "Administrators at the college level will say, 'We're not sure how long this is going to continue.'"

"While there's skepticism about online education," said Schleck, "there's also an argument that for a land-grant university in a huge, mainly rural state like Nebraska, online instruction could be important in expanding college access." Three of NU's four campuses are in the far eastern part of the state, and none are in the western half, she noted.

"At this stage it's all in an experimental mode," said Darcy. "Seeing if it works, what works – pedagogically, the jury is still out."

That being the case, it rubbed NU faculty the wrong way when the NU administration signed an agreement with Coursera, a for-profit provider of MOOCs (massive open online courses), without disclosing the terms in advance.

"Many faculty, especially those of us on the two collective bargaining campuses, felt we should have been involved before anyone signed something," said Roger Davis, a professor of history and past president of the University of Nebraska Kearney Education Association (UNKEA), a chapter of the National Education Association which represents faculty at NU's Kearney campus. "On the other hand, the university and Milliken have been very forthcoming in discussing it since then, and it's clear that the Coursera agreement doesn't commit us to very much."

Essentially, Davis explained, the agreement states that if an NU campus does want to move forward in offering MOOCs, that Coursera is who the school would work with. But no campus or faculty member is required to offer MOOCs or any course online.

## FACULTY AUTHORITY

At NU, who decides whether a MOOC measures up in terms of academic quality? "Under NU's bylaws, only the faculty can decide what can get credit and what cannot," said Bacon, adding that Milliken has not sought to undermine this faculty authority. "There are some regents who think MOOCs are the best thing since sliced bread, but their own bylaws have empowered us to make those decisions."

"We have several provisions in our contract that relate to online education," added the UNKEA's Davis, "and we have some questions about Coursera's instructor agreements." At the Kearney campus, he said, it would not be possible to offer a MOOC "until the union had vetted the agreement" for compliance with the contract. Online instruction issues are likely to feature in the next round of the UNKEA's contract negotiations, Davis said.

"Milliken has a lot of experience working with faculty in a collective bargaining environment," added Davis, noting that the president has had to deal with two different contracts at UNO and UNK. There is no collective bargaining agreement at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or the University of Nebraska Medical Center, but the AAUP's Darcy said that those two campuses are also affected by bargaining's results. "The benefits we get at Omaha are typically made standard system-wide," he explained.

In terms of the bargaining process itself, however, Davis said that Milliken has not been much involved. "The Board of Regents and their officers are essentially who we negotiate with," he explained. The president's role in those negotiations, he said, is "peripheral."

In his decade as NU president,

Milliken has at least proven not to be hostile to faculty unions, said Davis. "We're in a right-to-work state and a conservative state, so there are always a lot of voices out here not friendly to collective bargaining," he told *Clarion*. "As a leader, Milliken certainly could have taken a more anti-union route – there are politicians who would have supported it – and he chose not to do so."

## PRAGMATIST

"Milliken is a very pragmatic guy. He has a bit of the technician about him," Davis added. "He's mainly interested in pulling things together, moving things forward, getting things done. He's a person with a vision of where he wants to go, and he's willing to work with many different people to get there."

While Milliken has never pursued the type of end-run around faculty governance structures that characterized the CUNY administration's imposition of Pathways (see *Clarion*, August 2011) he does not run NU as a town-hall democracy. "When he has come to talk to our faculty senate, he's not really there to get our general input or seek consensus. But he does like to keep us informed, and he's a pretty straight shooter," commented the AAUP's Darcy.

The UNKEA's Davis says Milliken "has generally been complimentary toward the faculty role in governance." He explained that Milliken's "pragmatic side has always recognized that you can set some directions and an overall vision, but actual success relies on having a degree of integrity, a degree of legitimacy in the way you pursue it, so that you get people's support."

"Partly that's the nature of the system here," Davis added. "Each campus takes its responsibility for overseeing its own academic affairs pretty seriously."

Day-to-day, most University of Nebraska faculty have more contact with the head of their own campus administration than with the president of the system. (In the opposite of CUNY's administrative titles, the system head is called the president and the top official on each campus is called a chancellor.) "Milliken isn't micromanaging, which we like," commented Darcy. "He really seems to grant each chancellor at each campus the authority to run their own ship."

## BUDGET CHANGE

But Milliken has put through some sweeping changes, and they have not always been popular. "In one fell swoop, not long after he was hired, he radically changed the budget system" for funding of individual campuses, Darcy said. "The new budget model that he created gave him a reputation of seeming to have corporate leanings." The biggest change was to base a large share of campus discretionary funds on relative changes in enrollment: campuses are heavily penalized if enrollment drops, and generously rewarded if it climbs. While Darcy acknowledged that the Omaha campus had sometimes benefited as a result, he said these "incentives" are disproportionately large.

Continued on page 9

## Educational technology & the contract



PSC First Vice President Steve London (at lower right) speaks during a January 23 meeting of the PSC's Advisory Committee on Educational Technology. The committee is assessing the impact of digital technologies in higher education and advising the union bargaining team on potential issues in contract negotiations.

Peter Hogness

Continued from page 8

In 2013, the head of the faculty senate at University of Nebraska-Lincoln criticized UNL for shifting its hiring toward non-tenure-track positions in order to save money. “The corporate strategy that has been introduced and followed is not one that serves higher education the best,” said UNL Faculty Senate President Rigoberto Guevara. Recent growth in the proportion of non-tenure-track faculty at UNL has occurred mainly in full-time positions. But tenured and tenure-track faculty still outnumber contingents at UNL, which is not the case at most public universities.

Non-tenure-track full-timers are covered by collective bargaining agreements at UNO and UNK; part-time faculty are not unionized at any NU campus. Milliken has not said much in public about the university’s contingent faculty, full-time or part-time.

In announcing his move to CUNY, Milliken said it was “difficult to leave” his home state. At the same time, he said, he is “excited about this new challenge in the city where I began my career,” and that he was “honored” by the chance “to lead America’s premier urban public university.”

Milliken says he enjoyed his years in New York City, which is where he met his wife, Nana Smith, while both were working at Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft. But UNO Faculty Senate President Meredith Bacon, a native New Yorker herself, said those years did not seem to have left a strong mark on his taste in cuisine. “I never got him to like pastrami,” she told *Clarion*. “He always takes the bland food when there’s a choice – he doesn’t seem like a deli guy.”

#### WHAT TO EXPECT?

New York City offers fewer opportunities than Nebraska for some of Milliken’s past pastimes. “A passionate and competitive hunter, Milliken and his team, the Sandhills Bugeaters, won the prestigious One Box Pheasant Hunt at Broken Bow in 1995 – a competition in which the challenge is to bring in as many birds as possible using just one box of 25 shells,” reported NU’s alumni magazine in 2004.

Once he settles in as CUNY chancellor, how much will Milliken’s approach to students, faculty and staff resemble his record at University of Nebraska? What should CUNY expect from a Milliken administration?

“I could see him doing a big restructuring of some kind, like he did with changing our budget model. It’s possible. But if something’s working well for you, he’ll probably leave it alone,” ventured UNO’s Darcy.

“You wonder if people may change in a different environment,” mused Davis, of UNK. “I think of Bob Kerry, who was out here in Nebraska, and people said he got more heavy-handed when he went out east. But I think Milliken will probably tend toward a collaborative approach – it’s just his nature.”

# Adjunct pensions

By CLARION STAFF

Are you an adjunct who has not yet joined the New York City Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS)? If your answer is yes, then you should join immediately. Every day that you delay joining means that you may have to pay more money later on if you decide to join the pension plan, or if you get a full-time position and want to get pension credit for your adjunct work later on.

#### ELIGIBILITY

Many adjuncts do not realize that they are eligible to join a pension plan, or that it is to their advantage to do so. However, all adjuncts are eligible to join the New York City TRS from their first day of employment, provided that they have an appointment for at least 45 hours. Continuing education teachers who have a six-month appointment and work at least 30 hours per week are also eligible to join TRS.

Adjuncts and continuing education teachers who joined TRS af-

## Don’t wait to sign up

ter April 1, 2012, or who will join it in the future, are or will be in the pension system’s Tier 6. This pension tier requires TRS members to contribute a percentage of their pay that is based on annual earnings. TRS Tier 6 members who earn less than \$45,000 annually from their teaching contribute 3%. Those who earn between \$45,000 and \$55,000 contribute 3.5%. Most adjuncts earn less than \$45,000, and thus contribute just 3% if they are in Tier 6. Most TRS-eligible continuing education teachers work in either CLIP or CUNY Start and earn between \$45,000 and \$55,000, so if they are in Tier 6 they contribute 3.5%.

But if Tier 6 members want pension credit for CUNY work done before they signed up as members of TRS, they must pay 6% of their earnings that occurred before their TRS membership became effective, plus 5% interest, compounded annu-

ally. (That’s called “buying back” prior service.) The bottom line: for most CUNY adjuncts in Tier 6, buying back past service will cost more than twice as much as getting pension credit for work done while a TRS member.

So joining TRS right away will save you money, while delay will cost you more. The longer you delay becoming a TRS member, the more money you will have to pay to get prior-service credit.

#### PATH TO PENSION

In Tier 6, TRS members must have the equivalent of 10 years of full-time service to collect a retirement allowance. But even if you leave CUNY employment before you qualify, you will not lose money. If you do not reach the 10-year mark, you will get a refund of your contributions with 5% interest, which is a much higher interest rate than

most banks are paying now. If you do reach the 10-year mark, you will qualify for a pension that will be funded by both your contributions and contributions made by CUNY as your employer. If, however, you reach that mark but never sign up to join TRS, you are effectively leaving CUNY’s money on the table.

#### NO DOWNSIDE

While many people do not expect to remain CUNY adjuncts long enough for pension eligibility, the future is unpredictable. There is no economic downside to joining TRS – but a delay in signing up can be costly.

#### Delaying your enrollment can be costly.

Adjuncts, continuing education teachers and full-timers who became TRS members before April 1, 2012, are not in Tier 6. The rules for how much time you need to qualify for a pension and how much you contribute vary according to your pension tier, so the information above about Tier 6 pension eligibility does not apply to TRS members in other tiers.

For more information about TRS membership, contact your campus HR office or Jared Herst, the PSC’s coordinator of pension and welfare benefits. Jared can be reached at [jherst@pscmail.org](mailto:jherst@pscmail.org).

# Time-sheet petition gains momentum

By JOHN TARLETON

As the spring semester got underway, activists in the PSC’s Higher Education Officer (HEO) and College Lab Technician (CLT) chapters expanded a petition campaign protesting CUNY’s new electronic time-sheet system. The system time sheet has sparked an outpouring of criticism from professional staff over both the way it was imposed and the time sheet itself;

PSC members say it is too rigid and fails to reflect the variation in, or the full extent of the work, of HEOs and CLTs. “Universally, people feel that it’s deprofessionalizing,” said Anselma Rodriguez, a higher education associate who is coordinator of graduate study at Brooklyn College (BC).

#### TRACKING TIME

The two cross-campus chapters have gathered well over 1,000 signatures so far, and are fast gaining more. Rodriguez has worked with colleagues to gather 30 to 40 signatures at Brooklyn College; she says the new time sheet is deeply unpopular.

Members say the time sheet is structured so that an employee must report working from 9 to 5 each day for a total of no more than 35 hours per week, unless they receive advance approval from a supervisor to work longer hours (which for HEO-series employees can make them eligible for compensatory time or overtime). The time sheet offers no opportunity to record when an employee works late on a given day, on the weekends, during a normal lunch hour or off-location – as job responsibilities of professional staff often require.



Brooklyn College assistant to HEO Carrie Roberts (left) and higher education associate Anselma Rodriguez (right) review signatures they have helped to gather on their campus for the HEO/CLT time sheet petition campaign.

“Management demands that HEOs and CLTs be very flexible, and they are frequently given tasks that require working more than 35 hours in a week or outside of a 9-to-5 schedule,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “Yet the time sheet acts as though everyone works very rigidly between 9:00 and 5:00, which ignores the reality of what HEOs and CLTs actually do.”

#### PETITION DEMANDS

The petition demands that CUNY negotiate with the PSC on the impact of the time sheet changes, and says that any changes in how working

time is recorded must “reflect the complexity and variability of our jobs and schedules,” among other criteria.

“I’m not against change, but I have a problem with change when the people who are affected by it don’t have a say,” said Carrie Roberts, an assistant to HEO in BC’s School of Visual, Media and Performing Arts who is also gathering signatures.

Amy Geu, a CLT in Hunter’s geography department, said that in circulating the petition she has enjoyed “talking to other CLTs and hearing their stories about their

workdays.” Getting signatures has not been difficult, she added: “It was pretty straightforward. No one had any objections. The response was, ‘Anything to help the campaign.’”

#### HEOs, CLTs want CUNY to negotiate over impact of new time sheets.

After the current push for signatures, organizers say, the next step will be delivering the petition to the CUNY administration – and pressing for negotiations.

To find out more about the time-sheet petition, and how you can sign, contact Dierdre Brill at [dbrill@pscmail.org](mailto:dbrill@pscmail.org) or 212-354-1252.

## ART &amp; SOCIETY

## Fred Lonidier's labor of love

By CHRISTOPHER CARBONE

Over the last decade and more, many artists have been concerned about a broad array of social issues. Commitment to social commentary and criticism through artworks is viewed as a move beyond the art-for-art's-sake limitations of liberal modernism: the artist as social isolate. But is this move toward the social really all that substantial? I think it depends upon how we come to view the role of the artist. My commitment has long been that the concerns and exhibition of social art be connected in some way to organized efforts towards the same ends; art that intends to challenge the social world has its best chance in tandem with social/political organizations and their allies.

— Fred Lonidier

Fred Lonidier is a San Diego-based artist whose work is among those featured in this year's Whitney Biennial. He's likely the only participant who's also a union activist. A founding member and past president of American Federation of Teachers Local 2034 at the University of California-San Diego, Lonidier has put labor struggles at the center of his art for nearly four decades.

Lonidier's unionist pedigree, questioning of art world practices, and history of showing work in union halls and labor-friendly spaces all inform the quality of his work, which engages with class, not only in its themes, but in how, where and to who it is presented. These characteristics make Fred Lonidier a possibility model for politically minded artists in the age of Occupy.

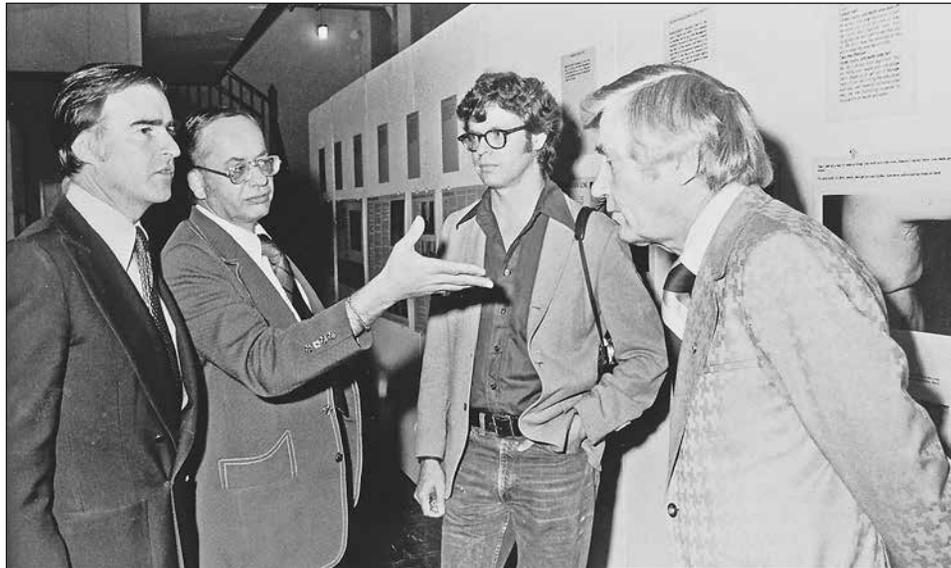
"It wasn't just the politically provocative photographs that got Fred Lonidier's exhibit at Tijuana's public university taken down," reported *CorpWatch* in 1999. "It was the fact that he had the audacity to leaflet *maquiladora* workers outside the factory gates and invite them to the gallery that got his show yanked."

Like much of Lonidier's recent work, the Tijuana exhibit focused on worker exploitation and resistance in Mexico in the NAFTA era. Administrators at the Autonomous University of Baja California ordered the show to close, explaining in an email that there had been complaints from "some members of the industrial community" about the factory flyer distribution. "The leaflet brought the show down," Lonidier commented later. "If I hadn't leafleted, they would have kept it up."

## NOT EASILY DETERRED

But Lonidier is not easily deterred. He was back in 2003 with an exhibit titled "NAFTA... Returns to Tijuana/TLC... Regresa a Tijuana," a "traveling exhibition" in the most literal sense: the work was mounted inside a semi-trailer truck similar to those that carry *maquiladora* products over the border every day. It was a venue that, while expensive, made censorship more difficult. In addition to touring *maquiladora* zones near Tijuana, the truck made stops north of the border at University of California, San Diego (UCSD), where Lonidier worked, and at San Diego City College, where Enrique Davalos, who helped organize the rolling show, is a professor of Chicano studies.

At times like these, Lonidier's documentary photo/text/video installations can bridge the divide between the art world and union struggles. Or start to: it is not always



Fred Lonidier (3rd from left) at a 1977 exhibit of "The Health and Safety Game." Others, from left: Gov. Jerry Brown; Los Angeles Citizen editor Steve Robertson; William Robertson, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor.

an easy bridge to cross. "Union members and workers generally are going to engage with my [artworks] in relation to the familiar work and struggle worlds they know, but I have received back a general recognition that my installations are sort of like and not like anything else with which they are familiar," Lonidier told *Clarion*.

"They know that modern art often takes unusual forms," Lonidier wrote in a 1992 essay, "Working With Unions II." While this in itself "is not a satisfactory understanding of what I do," he said, it can be a starting point for a dialogue, an exchange from which both parties can learn.

## LABOR ISSUES

"I always look for the submerged, missed, or forgotten labor issue – or for an issue that is about to emerge," Lonidier explains in his 1992 essay. "I look to the absences, inadequacies or invisibilities of the available discourse. In fact, much of what I have to say is already known and discussed or suspected by workers themselves. It may only be a question of legitimizing or distilling and organizing certain ideas rather than teaching in the one-way sense."

Lonidier's work and his path in the art world go back to his hiring by UCSD, his alma mater, where he earned his MFA in photography and is now professor emeritus. An early center for conceptual art, Lonidier's department was the kind of place that could welcome an artist with a bachelor's degree in sociology.

The 2014 Whitney Biennial (March 7-May 25) will feature "NAFTA... Returns to Tijuana/TLC... Regresa a Tijuana" and "GAF Snapshirts," a 1976 installation of 32

custom photo T-shirts. Lonidier describes the latter as a "sort of political pop art" that preceded his turn toward "artworks by, for and about class struggle."

The first of these more labor-centered works, "The Health & Safety Game" (1977), is being exhibited from February 27 through March 30 at Essex Street, a gallery on NYC's Lower East Side, in conjunction with the biennial. Originally shown at the Whitney and at AFSCME District Council 37 in 1977, in what was billed as a joint show, it is an installation of a large number of photo/text panels and a 20-minute black and white video. It includes close-up, documentary photographs of anonymous workers' injuries (titled "Steel Worker's Lungs", "Dental Technician's Back" and so on), panels arranged in the case-study style of corporate reports offer brief descriptions of workers' conditions, treatments and how they are fighting back, as well as displays of "management strategies" used to avoid paying for workers' care and compensation.

"It is a representation of the political economy of occupational health that is unfortunately as current today as when it was created," says Lonidier. Essex Street will follow up in June with a show of Lonidier's more recent works, including his *maquiladora*-focused art.

While taking class conflict as his subject matter, Lonidier also challenges art-world rules: How should documentary photographs be presented, what place does a photo-journalistic aesthetic have in high art, how can common symbols and pieces of working-class life be utilized within art – while giving viewers a lot to chew on?

## In the art world and the union hall

## Clarion FEBRUARY 2014

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"He [can] present workers' injuries as a zero-sum game or other rational calculus for employers while simultaneously tweaking the sensibilities of lovers of cutting-edge art," said artist Martha Rosler, who studied and worked with Lonidier in the 1970s at UCSD. "In addition, he chose to present textual material in three formats – short and simple, slightly longer, and more detailed – thus allowing audiences to take in as much of the text as they desired."

Artist and critic Allan Sekula wrote that Lonidier's "The Health and Safety Game" lays bare the "systemic character of everyday violence in the workplace." One could imagine a panel called "Fulfillment Center Worker's Legs" in this era of online shopping mega-warehouses.

"Including Fred's work in the Whitney Biennial represents an embrace of an artistic and political practice that stems from documentary, but works with a different sort of activist approach," said Rosler. "It recognizes the place of Lonidier's work in the long tradition of documentation of working-class jobs, often those held by men in industrial settings – but not only." Lonidier's artwork does not portray workers as "other," which, according to Rosler, is part of why it hasn't been as widely acknowledged by the mainstream art world. But that may be starting to change.

"At its best, his work is free of the self-righteousness so often attached to social responsibility and gives voice to people who need it," wrote Natalie Haddad in a 2011 review in *Frieze*.

The biennial's high profile in the art world certainly gives Lonidier a boost in those circles. Lonidier is optimistic that it can also be used as a way to connect with at least some union members. "New York is a more art-conscious town than almost any other in the US," he told *Clarion*. "Certainly a lot more union members will know about the show than would be the case for anything similar in San Diego." To build on those chance connections, Lonidier is working on outreach to union audiences for public discussions he is planning in New York.

## AT THE WHITNEY

The evening of Friday, March 7, which is a pay-what-you-wish night at the Whitney, Lonidier will join the crowd at the biennial, near his work, to talk with interested visitors.

On the afternoon of Sunday March 9, there will be an in-depth discussion with the artist at Essex Street (essexstreet.biz) on the Lower East Side, where Lonidier will show more of his labor artwork in June.

"What I hope to achieve is what I have long done: bridge my work within the field to the labor movement," Lonidier says.

## PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

# Governing at the grassroots

By MIKE MENSER &amp; RON HAYDUK

Like much of the rest of the globe, New York City is beset by two crises: economic instability and the changing climate. Any hope of making our intensely unequal and unsustainable city more equitable and resilient requires fundamental changes in the relationship between the government and its people, and between the economy and its infrastructure. This requires more than a change of administrations; it requires a reconstruction of the governance process itself.

Though this sounds daunting, there are movements implementing innovative models right here in NYC that could provide a roadmap for forging a more democratic and sustainable future. One such model is participatory budgeting (PB) – a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend some part of a public budget. We think participatory budgeting could play a key role in moving NYC in a new direction, and CUNY and unions such as the PSC are well positioned to be vital actors in this effort.

## A NEW MODEL

Last summer, the Bloomberg administration unveiled a \$20 billion plan to make New York City more “resilient.” Drafted by the NYC Economic Development Corporation, the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR) calls for the transformation of infrastructures and institutions so that this coastal financial capital might adapt to the changing climate and withstand its more dramatic onslaughts. The SIRR report calls for changes to communications, transportation, housing, financing, energy and even city government itself.

Can the typical “pro-growth” model of economic development run by a quasi-accountable public-private partnership, with government subsidies for low-wage retail jobs and luxury condos, make NYC more resilient? SIRR says “yes.” But how many will fit into this exclusive lifeboat? What about the “other half”? We believe participatory budgeting harks toward a different kind of collaboration, a *social-public* partnership.

Bill de Blasio’s landslide victory was largely the result of an unrelenting focus on a single theme: the human devastation caused by rising inequality. This widening gulf between rich and poor is intimately bound up with NYC’s efforts to respond effectively to climate change. Too many New Yorkers suffered from inadequate housing and services before Hurricane Sandy. (Mold, made so much worse by climate change, has been an issue for New York City Housing Authority tenants for years.) And for far too many, waves of gentrification have displaced and degraded communities with a force not unlike a 100-year flood. Any program for making NYC “resilient,” then, requires repairing damage from these two very different kinds of superstorms.

Participatory budgeting offers a model for community-based development and people-powered governance that can foster a more democratic, inclusive resilience – an approach that will truly leave New York a stronger city.

Three years ago, four NYC Council members worked with the Participatory Budgeting Project and with Community Voices Heard to set up a process that gave resi-

dents in their districts real power to decide how public money is spent. Modeled after an effort at grassroots governance pioneered two decades ago in Porto Alegre, Brazil, PB NYC has enabled thousands of residents to decide how to spend millions for projects to improve their neighborhoods (see [pbnyc.org](http://pbnyc.org)).

## HOW PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING WORKS

First, a City Council member agrees to dedicate \$1 million of his or her own capital discretionary funds to the process. Each fall, community leaders reach out to residents in their council district, organizing public assemblies to explain PB. At these gatherings, residents discuss district needs in a facilitated face-to-face setting and propose ideas to address those needs. From November to February, interested residents step up to collectively develop those ideas into full-



Increasing numbers of New Yorkers are becoming active in participatory budgeting. The process allows constituents to have a say in how some of their City Council member’s discretionary funds are allocated.

fledged proposals. Anyone age 13 and older can participate in neighborhood assemblies and budget delegate meetings, including the foreign-born and formerly incarcerated.

These “budget delegates” work with City agencies to make sure proposals meet the City’s fiscal and technical requirements. For example, a proposal for a solar-powered greenhouse from residents of a public housing complex must be verified by city officials to confirm that it is legally and technically feasible at a specific site. If the proposal passes those tests, it is placed on a ballot that the residents of the district vote upon in March. (To participate and vote one needs to be 16 or older and a resident of the district). The winning proposals are submitted to the City.

## MEETING PUBLIC PRIORITIES

Over the first two years of PB NYC, winning projects have reflected neighborhood priorities: education, safety, sustainability and public space. Some are familiar: computer classrooms for underfunded schools, improvements to parks, countdown clocks for dangerous intersections. Others are more “out of the box,” such as places for large-scale composting (District 39) and the solar-powered greenhouse noted above. One of our favorites involves a truly innovative way to address the problem of “food des-

erts”: a bus with a kitchen to teach kids how to cook sustainable, healthy meals that can reach children where they live (District 8).

Not only do the *projects* address needs, so does the *process*. Though PB is time-consuming (each process lasts several months), “efficiency” is in many ways increased. The multiplicity of players leads to a more wide-ranging scrutiny of proposals, thereby reducing the chances that a poorly thought-out proposal favored by some unfairly influential group is pushed through. When done right, such public deliberation displaces the power of lobbyists, exposes patronage, reduces partisanship and breaks through gridlock. Our own studies have shown that PB is also more inclusive and attractive than local elections in terms of race and class.

This democratic deepening of the process has major advantages, since more types of knowledge and imagination are brought

to exercise their “right to the city,” requires a city government committed to supporting genuine participation. There are more than 1000 PBs across the world and research shows the most inclusive, accountable and empowering are those where the government is a consistently supportive partner. In PB NYC, the community-based organizations who make the process work have not received nearly enough support. Both the City and civil society organizations need to fill this gap – and that’s where the PSC and CUNY come in.

This year, nine City Council districts across four boroughs are doing participatory budgeting. More than 20 council members have pledged to do it next year. PB is an excellent educational opportunity for students to experience democracy in action. The process itself is a place of learning from and about one’s neighbors and their communities and about how city government works with all its attendant complexities.

At Brooklyn College last year, a few students became budget delegates and worked with City agencies to develop proposals. They learned the nitty-gritty of the approval process for capital projects. This year and next, the PSC and faculty, students and staff at CUNY could help more students have this kind of urban-learning experience by assisting with outreach, research, translation of materials, and fundraising in the PB process.

## CUNY’S ROLE

CUNY community members could help get out the vote for this year’s PB elections, which will take place around the end of March. Next year, social science classes could do interviews with residents about needs and assist the PB NYC research team; science classes could present information about infrastructure and climate change; liberal arts classes could help communities present their visions and voices.

And CUNY itself could experiment with PB. When Brooklyn College’s student government took up PB, the college administration was so impressed that it contributed matching funds. And why not bring unions into the mix? In Latin America, PB has been used not just for capital projects, but workforce development. Perhaps the PSC, working with other unions, could put together such a project in NYC.

Participatory budgeting can give residents real decision-making power about things that matter. Our research has shown that it actively includes people of color and immigrants, young and old in a process that empowers people to collectively remake their neighborhoods. As the effects of climate change accelerate, our region’s collective future is up in the air and billions in federal funds are in play. Such people-powered processes could shape solutions to the twin storms of economic inequality and climate change.

Now imagine every CUNY campus being a hub for PB activity! This social-public partnership could give faculty, staff and students an inclusive and democratic space to provide a deeper education, and help shape the future of the city we all have a stake in.

*Michael Menser is an assistant professor of philosophy at Brooklyn College and President of the Board of the Participatory Budgeting Project ([www.participatorybudgeting.org](http://www.participatorybudgeting.org)). Ron Hayduk is professor of political science at Queens College and a member of the Participatory Budgeting NYC Research Board.*

## A more active, inclusive democracy



## 15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

### Tell Albany to reinvest in higher ed

Nearly \$2 billion in cuts to SUNY and CUNY over the last five years have driven up tuition, imperiled opportunities for students and threatened quality and access. It's time to reverse the draconian cuts and reaffirm our commitment to quality public higher education. Visit the NYSUT Member Action Center to fax lawmakers and tell them to support the Public Higher Education Quality Initiative. Go to

[mac.nysut.org/faxlegislators/widget/issue/193](http://mac.nysut.org/faxlegislators/widget/issue/193).

The Initiative calls for an endowment to hire full-time faculty and professional staff; increased funding for SUNY, CUNY and community colleges; and major state investment in student aid and opportunity programs. You can also show your support by "liking" [facebook.com/qualityhighered](https://www.facebook.com/qualityhighered) or tweeting your support for #nypublichighered.

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# City Council's progressive turn

By JOHN TARLETON

Last November, voters made clear that they want New York City to head in a new direction. This was true not only in the mayor's race, where Bill de Blasio won decisively with his focus on economic inequality, it also shaped the results in elections for City Council. With 22 of its 51 members newly elected, the council is more progressive than at any time in recent memory – and PSC activists say this will be good for CUNY.

In January, the political consequences of November's election quickly made themselves felt, beginning with Melissa Mark-Viverito's election as City Council Speaker on January 8. Mark-Viverito's victory signaled the rising influence of the council's Progressive Caucus, which grew from 11 to 20 members once the new council was sworn in, and it marked the first time that a Latina has held citywide office.

### AFTER BLOOMBERG

"This is a historic opportunity to change the politics of New York City," said Paul Washington, an activist with the PSC Legislative Committee and vice chair of the PSC's Higher Education Officer Chapter. "Melissa has a philosophical core that's about protecting the working and middle classes in New York that were devastated by Bloomberg."

The council's choice of Mark-Viverito, wrote *New York Daily News* columnist Juan Gonzalez, "sent a clear signal, especially to our business and real estate barons – the 1% who had everything their way during the Bloomberg era – that all branches of city government are now lined up behind Mayor de Blasio's promise to end the 'tale of two cities.'"

PSC members who've known Mark-Viverito as their councilmember were also pleased with the outcome. Blanca Vásquez, an adjunct lecturer in film and media studies at Hunter, lives in Manhattan Valley, which Mark-Viverito represented until 2013. Vásquez told *Clarion* that Mark-Viverito helped mediate a land use dispute between a power-

## New leadership is pro-CUNY



NYC Council Photo by William Alarise

**New City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito "has a philosophical core that's about protecting the working and middle classes," says one PSC activist.**



CSA

**Inez Barron (D-East New York), a career educator, will head the Committee on Higher Education.**

ful land owner and the Manhattan Valley Preservation Coalition, of which Vásquez is a member.

"I tend to be pretty skeptical of elected officials, but we grew to really trust her," Vásquez told *Clarion*. "She is direct, honest and you can have a serious conversation with her."

Others in the district were also pleased. "She's a fighter. She has always been there for us," said Elizabeth Owens who, lives in the South Bronx and is a member of

the grassroots group VOCAL-NY. Owens was among a couple dozen community activists who joined PSC members to watch Mark-Viverito's election as speaker by video stream, after the council chambers had filled to capacity.

Mark-Viverito's victory marked the first time in many years that selection of the council speaker had not been dominated by the Democratic Party's county bosses. She was opposed by the regular county organizations in the Bronx and Queens, and gained the Brooklyn organization's support relatively late in the game. "Ideology trumped the machines," commented PSC Legislative Committee member Alex Vitale. "This time, the Progressive Caucus was able to pull people away from their county machines to support a candidate based on her overall political principles."

### MARK-VIVERITO'S BACKGROUND

Mark-Viverito, 44, is a native of Puerto Rico who moved to New York as a college student, earning her bachelor's degree at Columbia University and a master's in public administration at Baruch College. After working as an organizer at 1199SEIU Healthcare Workers East, she was first elected to the council

from East Harlem in 2005. During her time on the council she has gained a reputation as a staunch defender of affordable housing and of workers' rights. Washington says that Mark-Viverito understands that CUNY has long been a key to opportunity for students of color. "Only benefits can come from that," he told *Clarion*.

A close ally of Mayor Bill de Blasio, Mark-Viverito is co-chair of the council's Progressive Caucus, established in 2010 with strong backing from many of the city's unions, including the PSC. In the wake of her election as speaker, Mark-Viverito signaled the council's new direction by quickly moving to advance a bill that will expand the City's new paid sick-day law, covering more workers than a compromise measure grudgingly accepted last year by then-Speaker Christine Quinn.

Mark-Viverito also appointed progressive allies to a number of key committee chairmanships, tapping Brooklyn Councilmember Inez Barron to chair the council's Committee on Higher Education. Barron comes to the position with 36 years of experience in education as a classroom teacher, assistant principal and administrator. She served five years in the State Assembly before winning

a council seat in November, in the East New York district that had been represented by her husband, Charles Barron. Like the two previous higher education committee chairs, Charles Barron and Ydanis Rodríguez, Inez Barron is an outspoken supporter of increased funding for CUNY.



Kathy Wilkens/AP

**Carlos Menchaca (D-Sunset Park), chairs the council's Committee on Immigration. He is the son of Mexican immigrant parents.**

"CUNY colleges have been underfunded and understaffed for years," she told *Clarion*. Barron says she supports Mayor de Blasio's campaign promise to redirect \$150 million in corporate tax breaks to greater City support for CUNY colleges. She says she herself would not have received a college degree without access to CUNY.

### 'A historic opportunity to change the politics of NYC'

"I was able to attend CUNY because it was free," said Barron, who graduated from Hunter College in 1967 and went on to earn a master's degree from Bank Street College of Education. As committee chair, she said she would like to examine ways to reduce the amount of money that students must spend on textbooks.

"I'm concerned about Pathways," Barron added. "I've heard from instructors that it deprives students of the fullness of their education." She also expressed concern about the poor preparation of so many New York City public school graduates for college-level work; on both topics, she is especially interested in the views of those who are closest to the classroom.

Other new committee chairs also have extensive personal experiences with the issues their committees focus on. Daneek Miller, former president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1056, will head the Committee on Civil Service and Labor. Carlos Menchaca, the son of Mexican immigrants, will head the Immigration Committee. Daniel Dromm (D-Queens), a former school teacher and United Federation of Teachers activist, will head the Committee on Education, while Ritchie Torres, who grew up in a NYCHA development will head the Committee on Housing and Buildings.

"The PSC and other unions worked hard for a more progressive city government and are now seeing the results," said PSC First Vice President Steve London. "CUNY's poised to benefit."