

Clarion

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JANUARY 2013



COMPOSITION

Time and again

Time with students is key in English 101, professors at QCC say.

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Pat Arnow

SCHOLARSHIP & SANDY CLIMATE & CUNY

Superstorm Sandy highlighted the challenges posed by human-induced climate change, and CUNY faculty are helping shape how our society responds. Above, Reginald Blake, associate professor of physics at City Tech and a visiting professor

at City College, describes how the satellite data he studies helps track changes in weather patterns over time. A member of the NYC Panel on Climate Change, Blake says New York City is heading into a warmer and wetter future. **PAGE 7**

FOOD WORKERS

They're hungry for a union

About 200 fast-food workers across NYC launched a historic one-day strike to demand higher wages and respect. Expect more such actions. **PAGE 8**

ACCREDITATION

Middle States warns MEC

Medgar Evers College has been found non-compliant with three out of the Middle States Commission's 14 standards. It must submit a follow-up report by Sept. 1. **PAGE 5**

PATHWAYS

Petition goes national

5,000 faculty across the country have signed a joint UFS/PSC petition calling for a moratorium on further implementation of Pathways. **PAGE 3, 10-11**



BARGAINING

RF workers want fair deal

PSC members at the CUNY Research Foundation's Central Office held a protest to demand a fair contract. At issue are wages, benefits... and blue jeans? **PAGE 4**

City unions are unsettled

By PETER HOGNESS

Every municipal employee in New York City is now working under an expired contract. It is the first time since New York City's fiscal crisis in the 1970s that the City has had no current labor agreements with any of its 152 bargaining units.

In addition to employees of mayoral agencies, workers in NYC-based public agencies, like New York City Transit or CUNY, are also working under expired deals.

FROSTY

A few groups of workers, like school custodians or sewage treatment workers, saw their contracts run out as long ago as 2007 or 2008. But the overwhelming majority of these contracts have expired since 2009.

"The situation is symbolic of the frosty turn Mayor Michael Bloomberg's relationship with organized labor has taken since he began his third term," the *Wall Street Journal* reported November 13. Since the economic crash in 2008, the administration has pushed for a policy of austerity, and has held the line against wage increases.

As public revenues fell in the

Labor agreements 100% expired

wake of the crash, the City opposed efforts to balance the budget by raising taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers. That left belt-tightening as the only alternative, and when the City opened bargaining with the largest City workers' union, DC 37, last November, it offered three years with 0% annual raises, followed by two 2% raises, in a five-year deal.

Union leaders say that this hard-line stance is the root cause of the citywide logjam in public-worker contract talks. As a result, many labor leaders have concluded that it is better to wait.

"Labor is anxious to deal with the next mayor, to deal with a new administration," the head of the Detectives Endowment Association, Michael Paladino, told the *Journal*.

OLD DEALS

The PSC contract with CUNY expired on October 19, 2010. Most other public workers in NYC saw their contracts expire even longer ago than that: teachers, nurses, police officers, firefighters and members of the largest city workers' union,

DC 37, have all been working even longer without a new contract than members of the PSC.

Because CUNY must get backing from both the City and State for any contract settlement, the University has traditionally been reluctant to make an economic offer while municipal union contracts are largely unsettled. But the PSC and CUNY have been holding talks on other fronts, seeking to make progress where they can, even in the absence of an economic offer.

Agreements have been reached that made paid parental leave a permanent part of the contract, and put more money into the PSC-CUNY Research Awards. Talks have continued on adjunct health care, and the union is hopeful that they will be concluded soon.

Under a part of New York labor law, called the Triborough Amendment, when a public-worker contract expires, its terms remain in place until a new agreement is negotiated. This means that the grievance procedure and other union rights are still

in force, but salary schedules remain unchanged. (Movement within an existing salary schedule, such as the step increases laid out in the PSC contract, can still proceed, since that schedule is still on the books. But the salary schedule as a whole is not increased, so the amounts in the schedule haven't changed, and those who have reached the top of their scale will get no raises until there is a new agreement.)

While contract discussions between the City of New York and its

Unions say Bloomberg's hard line is cause of log jam.

unions remain largely frozen, there have been some procedural developments. In early October, New York's Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) named the three members of a fact-finding panel that will

examine the standoff between the United Federation of Teachers and the NYC Department of Education. "Fact-finding" is essentially a form of non-binding arbitration, and the three panel members are all veteran labor arbitrators. After extensive hearings, they are to issue a report on "the causes and circumstances of the dispute."

"For nearly three years we have been unable to reach a new contract

with the Department of Education," said UFT President Michael Mulgrew. "In the past a review of the issues by independent fact-finders appointed by the State has helped break this kind of deadlock."

On November 29, the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), the K-12 principals' union, asked PERB to appoint a fact-finding panel to assess its contract dispute as well.

RAISES DUE

CSA's announcement indicated why both the UFT and CSA are hopeful that the report of a fact-finding panel would be sympathetic to the unions' case:

"During the last round of bargaining, the City agreed to give every municipal union, except for the UFT and CSA, a 4% raise each year over two years," the principals' union said. "CSA is seeking a two-year contract with 4% raises in each year, following that pattern established by the City."

While the City has insisted on following "the pattern" in previous years, it now maintains it cannot afford to give those 4% raises to the UFT and CSA. The two unions hope that the fact-finding panels will give more weight to the precedent set by those other contracts, and recommend that they get the same 4% hikes that other unions have already received.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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CUNY alumni: allies vs. Pathways

● On March 13, 2012, the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association of Hunter College passed a resolution expressing our disapproval of the Pathways Initiative and calling upon the university to "support transfer strategies that are based upon intercampus faculty agreements with administrative cooperation." As far as we know, we are the only organized group of CUNY alumni to take a stand thus

far. So many CUNY alumni hold faculty and administrative positions throughout the university, and we are able to get timely inside information about Pathways fairly easily.

The PSC, whose first president, Belle Zeller, was an alumna of Hunter, and whose first vice president, Israel Kugler, was an alumnus of CCNY, can find natural and powerful allies for this and other causes among the 1.1 million living

CUNY alumni, most of who still live in the New York metropolitan area. Alumni who understand what Pathways is and what it will do to the quality of the CUNY undergraduate degree have a very real interest in visibly supporting the call for a moratorium.

Patricia Rudden
City Tech &
Past President, Alumni Association
of Hunter College

Thanks for Sandy coverage

● Congratulations on the great *Clarion* articles about how CUNY faculty and staff were affected by Sandy, especially the coverage of those at York College. Your articles gave folks who didn't see things firsthand a chance to feel, know and feel more what other people have endured and are enduring. And a big, beautiful thanks to all at York who made the college the kind of welcoming shelter described in *Clarion* for those who were displaced. That's a beautiful story.

Janice Cline
York College

Shirley Jackson's story, "The Lottery," is our story. In Jackson's tale, the townspeople annually murder one of their own, a tradition they deem necessary to maintain their way of life. It seems insane. But then, that is exactly what we do when we tolerate firearm massacres as the sacrifice we must make to the god of firearm freedom, to the NRA and its tragic, foolish philosophy.

K.J. Walters
Lehman College

Shout-out to Shortell

● I've just read Tim Shortell's outstanding article on "Election Polls, Expertise and Empirical Thinking" in the latest issue of *Clarion* – and I thought it was one of the best articles I've ever read in our union newspaper. Shortell clearly conveyed the importance of truth, evidence, and rational thinking in coping with complex realities, and he underscored the value of critical thinking in education. If only the world at large could assess the real problems faced by the human condition in the same manner. I hope that the officials in CUNY who wish to take us down the "Pathways to Perdition" read this article and reflect on what our students need to learn in order to function effectively in the real world. Very well done.

Howard Prince
BMCC (retired)

Getting ready to stage a strike



Members of Local 32BJ SEIU who work in 32 Broadway theatres celebrate on Dec. 13 after voting to authorize their bargaining team to call a strike if a new agreement is not reached when the current contract expires Dec. 30.

Newtown shooting

● We are sick at yet another firearm massacre of innocents. And sick that the NRA says there is nothing to be done, no limits on firearms, magazines or firepower that can be imposed, that these dead children are the sacrifice we must make for freedom. The tail is wagging the dog. If the massacre of children in Newtown, Conn., isn't enough, what is?

So the 9-mms guns were legally purchased and owned by the mother. Well, that is exactly the problem, isn't it? The purchaser may very well be responsible and mentally balanced, not emotional, guaranteed never to lose her mind. But firearm ownership is like a genetic disease. Who knows when someone in a firearm family will flip out—if not in this generation, then perhaps in the next, as firearm ownership becomes a family tradition?

Write to Clarion

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

Pathways forced into slow lane

By PETER HOGNESS

Pathways, CUNY's plan to impose new rules on general education and transfer, is in growing trouble across the University. Implementation of the plan has slowed as a number of college governance bodies have refused to approve Pathways courses, and there are now questions about whether CUNY can have Pathways courses in place by Fall 2013, as originally planned.

More faculty bodies at CUNY have come out in support of a moratorium on further Pathways implementation, and a petition backing a moratorium has won national support (see article below).

On December 4, the University Faculty Senate (UFS) joined the call for a moratorium, in a resolution approved by a vote of 63 to 3, with two abstentions. "As the implementation of Pathways has progressed to each subsequent stage, the flaws of the Pathways curriculum have emerged more and more clearly to the faculty who will be teaching these courses," the resolution says. As a result, faculty at several campuses "have declined to act to approve courses" that are tailored for the Pathways framework.

TIME TO HIT 'PAUSE'

Pointing out that the CUNY Trustees' 2011 Pathways resolution states that the policy must be regularly reviewed "beginning in 2013," the UFS called on the Chancellery "to begin the required review in January 2013" and to conduct it collaboratively with the UFS. Until that

More college senates say no



Associate Professor Arazazu Borrachero speaks at QCC Senate meeting.

review is concluded, the UFS said, the Chancellery should observe a moratorium "on all further implementation of Pathways."

On December 6, the Queens College Academic Senate endorsed the UFS resolution, and the Bronx Community College Senate followed suit the same day. BCC's moratorium resolution was approved by a vote of 33 to 12, with 7 abstentions.

In lower Manhattan, BMCC's Academic Senate raised the ante with its own vote on November 28. It, too, urged a CUNY-wide moratorium – and then enacted a moratorium of its own. "Be it further resolved," the BMCC resolution said, "that the Ac-

ademic Senate of BMCC participate in the moratorium by not acting on any Pathways courses or Pathways curriculum changes" until a committee of the college's senate has conducted its own review and reported back by April 24.

Baruch's Faculty Senate unanimously approved a resolution on December 6 that took aim at the way the Pathways process has attempted an end-run around CUNY's elected faculty bodies, bypassing them in favor of ad hoc, administration-appointed panels.

"At Baruch College, curricular governance, including the development of new courses and programs,

resides with the autonomous faculties at each of [its] three schools," the resolution declared. It took note of the college administration's recent creation of "an ad hoc committee to facilitate curricular coordination," and allowed that this committee might play "a mediating role" between the schools. But since the ad hoc committee "has no governance authority in curricular development," the resolution insisted that the college must "suspend the ad hoc committee's Pathways-related curricular development, because this work circumvents the governance authority of the faculty."

Also in early December, an energetic organizing effort at Queensborough Community College demonstrated the depth of QCC faculty opposition to Pathways. On December 5, 170 QCC faculty attended a special meeting on whether to hold a college-wide referendum on restoring an earlier QCC moratorium on Pathways actions, which had been in effect until a controversial vote at the college's senate in mid-November. The vote at the special meeting favored such a referendum by 130 to 30. But while the lopsided margin left little doubt about how QCC faculty feel, it fell short for procedural reasons.

QCC's bylaws say that a faculty meeting of this type must include at least 25% of faculty members eligible to vote to have a quorum, which works out to around 94 people. But while total attendance far exceeded this threshold, college administra-

tors insisted on applying the standard of New York's open meetings law, which requires the presence of 50% plus one. By that yardstick – rarely applied in the past – attendance at the meeting was deemed insufficient.

The referendum proposal also came before QCC's Academic Senate, in a meeting on December 11, with a roughly similar outcome. Though supporters of the referendum had a majority of votes cast,

Support grows for moratorium proposal.

they were three votes short of a majority of the entire Senate membership, which was required.

The powerful turnout at the faculty meeting has nonetheless had a lasting effect. "People really felt energized by the faculty meeting," said PSC Chapter Chair Judith Barbanel. "It was the largest we've had in years, and it changed the atmosphere." QCC faculty, she said, are still determined to stop Pathways from going into effect.

NO ACTION

The vote at BMCC followed the example of Brooklyn College, where the senate has refused to take action on Pathways courses since the spring. And earlier this fall, Pathways-compliant courses were voted down by college senates at Hostos and LaGuardia Community Colleges, while the College of Staten Island's senate backed the moratorium call.

In different forms on different campuses, faculty opposition and resistance to Pathways has been growing during the Fall 2012 semester. With Spring semester beginning soon, it is hard to see how the Pathways curriculum can be securely in place by Fall 2013.

A national petition backs moratorium

A national petition calling for a moratorium on CUNY's Pathways initiative has gained about 5,000 signatures, and the number continues to climb. The appeal is jointly sponsored by the PSC and by the University Faculty Senate.

One-third of those signing the petition to date have left comments elaborating why they signed, an unusually high rate for an online petition. So far about 70% of those signing teach at other universities, with many noting that they have confronted similar initiatives at their own institutions. (See pp. 10 and 11).

PATHWAYS & AUSTERITY

In a November 26 e-mail announcing the petition, UFS Chair Terrence Martell and PSC President Barbara Bowen described Pathways as an attempt "to impose a diluted system of general education" that will damage students' education.

"Under the pretext of easing student transfer and increasing graduation rates, Pathways will deliver a minimal curriculum for CUNY's working-class students," they wrote. "It removes science lab requirements, limits foreign language requirements, and cuts

5,000 have signed so far

back on faculty time with students in English classes."

What is driving the CUNY's intense push for these changes? Martell and Bowen point to shifting national discussions of higher education policy: "Forty years of public policy focused on access to college is being replaced by a single-minded demand for increased graduation rates – whatever the cost in academic quality," they say. "Pathways is an attempt to move students through the system more quickly even as budgets are cut, by reducing academic requirements." Pathways, they conclude, "is austerity education for an austerity economy."

Educational policy foundations, legislators and others involved in national discussions of US higher education have emphasized boosting college graduation rates and shortening time-to-degree, but have not had as much to say about how these are affected by three decades of budget cuts in public higher education (see articles in the October

2012 *Clarion*, "Austerity Education" and "The Great Cost Shift").

The new policy emphasis has made itself felt across the US. "Higher education 'reforms' similar to Pathways, some even with the same name, are moving forward throughout the nation," Bowen and Martell wrote. The response to the UFS/PSC petition suggests that their criticisms of Pathways sound familiar to faculty at many other institutions.

Other universities are feeling similar pressures.

Addressed to CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein and to Benno Schmidt, Jr., chair of the Board of Trustees, the petition supports CUNY faculty and staff in their opposition to Pathways, which it dubs "an austerity curriculum," and calls for "an immediate retraction of the threats and intimidation the CUNY administration has used to gain compliance" with the plan. (See *Clarion*, October and December 2012, for coverage of these threats and CUNY faculty's response).

The petition concludes by urging "an immediate moratorium on

further implementation of Pathways until an atmosphere free of coercion is established and academically sound alternatives can be considered." (Full text is online at psc-cuny.org/pathwayspetition.)

SUPPORT

The petition has been brought to academics' attention by the Campaign for Higher Education; the American Association of University Professors; the California Faculty Association; United University Professions; locals of the American Federation of Teachers; and faculty organizations from Texas, Washington, Pennsylvania and elsewhere.

Those signing the petition include a number of faculty responsible for the teaching of writing to students at their own universities, such as Dawn Skorczewski, director of University Writing at Brandeis, and Darlene Evans of Cornell University's John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines.

Others include Elaine Mayes, photographer and professor emerita at NYU, whose past students include documentarian Ric Burns; noted Africanist Christopher Miller of Yale; Eric Lott, professor of cultural

studies at the University of Virginia; and Mark Edmundson, professor of English at UVA and an analyst of US higher education.

In a letter to science faculty, inviting support for the petition, Hunter professor and PSC Treasurer Michael Fabricant took note of the particular obstacles that Pathways creates for general education science classes. "By requiring that all courses in the Common Core be three hours, Pathways leaves insufficient time for adequate science instruction," Fabricant wrote. "Without a fourth instructional hour, students in general education science courses will not be exposed to science courses with a concurrent laboratory component."

KEY MOMENT

PSC First Vice President Steve London, a political scientist at Brooklyn College, made a similar point in a letter to social scientists. Pathways "makes it possible to satisfy the Flexible Core without taking a social science course," London said.

"This is a watershed moment for public higher education," both PSC leaders said. "We know that many other institutions are also experiencing the same pressures." Now is the time, they said, "to take a next step in the resistance to Pathways, by taking our struggle beyond CUNY." – PH

Write on! QCC profs inspire students

By JOHN TARLETON

"Alex, what's your definition of fate?"
 "Is violence just physical, or is there emotional violence as well?"
 "Was anyone in *When I Was Puerto Rican* concerned about their reputation?"

"Don't stop writing. If you keep the pen moving, something will happen in your brain."

It was the first day back from Thanksgiving break and Joan Dupre, an assistant professor of English at Queensborough Community College, was hard at work. For almost two hours she peppered students in her English Composition 101 class with questions and encouragement, moving back and forth across her classroom, coaxing and cajoling her 24 students to become better writers and thinkers.

STRATAGEMS

The class was preparing to delve into *Girl in Translation*, a coming-of-age novel about a young Chinese American immigrant in Brooklyn who pursues her dreams amid great hardship. Dupre used a variety of stratagems – small and large group discussions, group competitions to list the book's themes on the blackboard – to spur discussion. Other techniques Dupre uses to promote interaction include having students role-play and discuss key scenes from a book, having students peer-edit each other's initial writing drafts, or presenting questions in class as a *Jeopardy*-style quiz show.

"It's a much more active education they are taking part in," said Dupre. "It's pedagogically sound, but it takes time."

Time, however, could soon be in short supply for Dupre and the other faculty in QCC's English Department who teach introductory English composition courses.

Time in English 101 pays off



QCC assistant English professor Joan Dupre poses a question to one of her students.

These classes currently meet for four hours per week; but under Pathways, all core general education courses, including introductory English composition courses, would be limited to three classroom hours per course. For the people who do the teaching, it's a deeply frustrating situation.

"There's no depth to the learning," Dupre said of Pathways. "It's like skating over ice."

STUDENTS FIRST

Seeking to protect their students' access to a quality education, the QCC English Department has rejected Pathways-compliant English composition courses this semester and has even stared down threats by QCC's administration to fire

most of the department's instructors (see *Clarion*, October 2012).

The conflict has been covered by *The New York Times*, WNYC, *Chronicle of Higher Education* and others. Faculty at QCC and elsewhere say that the root of the problem is Pathways' top-down process. Administrators far removed from the classroom, they say, are imposing decisions that make no sense to those who actually teach. Support has been growing for a moratorium on Pathways implementation, to allow for a more collaborative, faculty-driven discussion of curricular reform (see page 3).

As the battle over Pathways rages, QCC's English faculty continue working with their students, developing the skills and the cul-

tural competency students will need to succeed.

On the same day just after Thanksgiving, Beth Counihan, an associate professor of English who also teaches at QCC, led a fast-paced class discussion.

Her students had begun reading John Guare's play *Six Degrees of Separation* about an ambitious young striver who briefly soared to the pinnacle of New York high society in the 1980s by pretending to be the son of the actor Sidney Poitier. Counihan combined a short in-class writing assignment with a wide-ranging conversation about some of the play's key themes.

"Context! That's my word," Counihan told her class as she began to explain the narrative structure and techniques of theater and how to follow the script's stage directions. She then guided students through the cultural backdrop to the themes of race and class that are central to the play.

Counihan wants her students to become "self-regulating learners" who develop the habits that successful college students need – from keeping a schedule to taking thorough notes and paying close attention to others in class discussion. And throughout the session she drops friendly hints to lagging students and points to examples set by their better-prepared peers.

"Small group work is so important for developing social skills," Counihan said afterward. She can't imagine giving students this kind of support while covering the material in the syllabus in less than four hours a week. "We [already] have to compress so much," she explained. "The historical-cultural context would take a whole class by itself."

For Julisa Brooks, the time Counihan devotes to helping her

understand the context for what she is reading is invaluable.

"I hate history, but the way she teaches makes me want to learn history," said Brooks, who was wearing her red Target workshirt. Looking over her work for the class, she leafed through pages of notes diligently taken all semester, with words that were new to her vocabulary: "obscurity," "notoriety," "playwright."

'RIDICULOUS'

The idea of reducing the hours for English 101, Brooks said, "is ridiculous." Without the time provided by a class like this, she told *Clarion*, "You're not going to learn anything about literature, drama [and] art."

One of Dupre's students, Angela Rivas, told *Clarion* that the free-flowing discussions in her class had taught her that "there's always another side to an argument."

Rivas is studying to become a nurse, and she says the skills she is learning in English Comp 101 will be valuable throughout her life. She cited the case of a medical worker she knows, who was mistakenly found at fault on the job because

the records she'd written were unclear. Communicating effectively in writing, she says, "will help me because I'll know I can always back myself up," she said.

Dupre's emphasis on learning to write clearly and vividly while refraining from clichés has paid off, Rivas added.

"Before I wasn't as descriptive in my writing," Rivas said. I would say, 'My dad was upset.' Now I will write, 'My dad looked at me with glaring eyes.'"

As for the amount of time allotted for in her Comp 101 class, Rivas said, "If anything I would like a few more minutes."

Fourth hour makes small group work more possible.

RF workers step up pressure

Workers at the Central Office of the CUNY Research Foundation (RF-CUNY) are stepping up their efforts to win a fair contract settlement. With management and the union far apart on a number of key issues, PSC members are pressing management to change its stance.

Bargaining on a new three-year contract began at the end of September. The 94 members of the RF-Central Office PSC chapter have signaled their unity by wearing PSC buttons at work and by organizing coordinated days on which they all wear the same pro-union t-shirt.

STREET HEAT

On December 17, RF workers and allies picketed outside the Research Foundation headquarters, while the organization's Board of Directors was slated to hold its semi-annual meeting eight floors above.

"The more we stay united, the harder it is for them to put us down," said Rafael Ahumada, a worker in the Grants and Contracts Department.

The RF Central Office administers CUNY's grants and awards, which last year totaled more than \$350 million. Though closely linked to CUNY in practice, the foundation is technically a separate private-sector entity. It is therefore not covered by the Taylor Law, a State statute that prohibits public-sector employees from going on strike. The present union contract at the Central Office expires December 31, and no strike vote has yet been taken.

Management is currently offering wage increases of 1.5%, 1.5% and 1.75% while demanding that workers pay a higher percentage of their health care premiums.

The paltry wage offer has incensed members. "The cost of living is ridiculous," said Debbie Sacco of the RF's Human Resources Department. "I have two children living at home with me."

Management, union far apart on pay and benefits

Management is also looking to reduce the amount of annual leave and sick pay for new employees. In addition, it has sought to impose a new dress and personal appearance code that would regulate everything from untucked shirts to "natural or unnatural body odors." RF negotiators withdrew the latter point in response to union objections, but are still pursuing other elements of the dress code demand.

The union is seeking pay increases commensurate with the increased volume of work and the cost

of health care. It is also demanding paid parental leave for new parents and is resisting management's drive to tightly regulate members' personal appearance. Thomas Kim, an RF worker and member of the union bargaining team, says that the biggest problem with the proposed dress code is that "it would open a door to discrimination." Would a guayabera in the summertime violate such a code? PSC members say this would not be an issue at other non-profit educational institutions, and there is no reason it should be at the RF.

The main issues remain the economic ones. "It's becoming apparent that there's going to be more of a fight to reach an agreement" on salary increases and benefits, said Kim. The December 17 picket, he said, was a start.

"We can't take this situation lightly," said union activist Julieann Brown, who works in the Grants & Contract Department. "Management sticks together. So we have to stick together as well." –JT



Picketing outside RF-CUNY headquarters on December 17.

MEC accreditation at risk

By JOHN TARLETON

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) has officially warned Medgar Evers College (MEC) that its accreditation could be in jeopardy. It was the first time since the early 1990s that the Middle States Commission has taken such action against a CUNY college.

The warning follows two successive faculty votes of no-confidence in MEC's president and provost, who took office in 2009 (see *Clarion*, January 2011 and June 2012). In their time in office, President William Pollard and Provost Howard Johnson have come under sharp criticism from faculty and students, as well as elected officials and members of the central Brooklyn community.

A November 15 statement from MSCHE explained that it "places an institution on Warning when, in the Commission's judgment, the institution is not in compliance with one or more Commission accreditation standards." At issue for MEC were standards on Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal; Institutional Assessment; and Assessment of Student Learning – three of the 14 criteria the Commission uses to determine a college's accreditation.

'LIMITED RESPONSES'

Medgar Evers was last accredited by Middle States in 2007 without any problems – in fact, it was given a commendation. But when the college submitted its Periodic Review Report in 2012, "the report provided limited responses to requested information and necessitated extraordinary effort by the Commission's representatives," the MSCHE complained. The Commission ultimately concluded that the college had failed to demonstrate compliance, and MEC was placed on warning.

As a result, Medgar Evers College is required to provide a monitoring report on September 1, 2013, documenting that it meets all 14 standards. The Commission will then send a small team to conduct an on-site visit. The monitoring report, the small-team report and MEC's response to the small-team report will then be evaluated by the Commission. If the Commission determines that MEC has made insufficient progress, the school can be put on probation, which can be followed by either suspension or removal of accreditation.

MEC President Pollard downplayed the warning, saying he was "confident" that "the vision for MEC will be achieved." Pollard cast the monitoring report as "an opportunity to explicitly respond to Middle States regarding how we have made progress regarding compliance," adding that "we have identified areas for improvement over the next five years."

Middle States warns college



Several hundred Medgar Evers College students walked out of class Oct. 17 to demand the school's president and provost resign.

"Medgar Evers College is in a state of emergency," responded Sallie Cuffee, chair of the MEC Faculty Senate, in an e-mail to colleagues. "Our college is justifiably proud of the many successes it has forged and challenges overcome," Cuffee wrote. "To have our Middle States accreditation put at risk because of the dereliction and failings of this administration...is unconscionable."

In response to an e-mail query from *Clarion*, Senior Vice Chancellor Jay Hershenson said that "CUNY is assisting the College and we anticipate that the appropriate work will be done." Emphasizing that MEC remains accredited, Hershenson wrote that MEC "is working cooperatively with Middle States in order to make the necessary improvements."

UNIQUE

CUNY spokesperson Michael Arena declined to name any other CUNY institution that has been similarly treated by Middle States in the last two decades. According to information on the Middle States website, no other CUNY college has been placed on warning since 1999. In 1990, Baruch College was put on warning for failing to retain students of color and for low representation of faculty members of color.

Members of MEC's Faculty Senate and its PSC chapter told *Clarion* that the warning from Middle States was triggered by the failure of MEC Provost Johnson to provide an adequate strategic plan.

To guide the accreditation process, Johnson hired a Syracuse-based consulting firm that critics said did not know the college well enough to do the job. Johnson and

Pollard were both based at Syracuse University for many years, Johnson from 1973 to 2003 and Pollard from 1989 to 2002.

"The underlying problem is that they have so alienated the faculty that they thought a few consultants could do what faculty should do," the Faculty Senate's Cuffee told *Clarion*.

Johnson also received a faculty vote of no-confidence in 2005 during his tenure as

Provost at the University of North Texas (UNT). A major source of faculty discontent at UNT was the report in the college's student paper that Johnson had lifted whole sections of his proposed strategic plan from several other universities without attribution. Johnson defended himself by saying that his proposal was essentially a draft – "something to react to," he told the paper. But one of the schools, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, threatened to sue for copyright infringement (see *Clarion*, February 2011).

The month before the Middle States warning was announced, the Pollard administration sent shock waves through Medgar Evers College when it told department chairs that it wanted them to prepare "action plans" for reducing the number of course offerings for the Spring semester by as much as 30%. The administration's October 3 directive cited a decline in Fall semester enrollment and a projected \$3 million deficit as the reason: most of the projected course reductions would have entailed eliminating sections taught by part-time faculty.

After loud protests from MEC faculty and the PSC, the college's administration has retreated from this call for such deep course reductions. PSC First Vice Presi-

dent Steve London said that while MEC's 8% decline in enrollment this fall is a "very real problem" that has to be addressed, the administration's description of the school's economic woes was exaggerated. The college has other reserves it can draw on, London noted, and, if necessary, CUNY could come to the school's aid while it works to boost its enrollment.

Clinton Crawford, PSC chapter chair at MEC, told *Clarion* that the administration's retreat from such draconian cuts was the only logical thing to do. "If you don't improve delivery of services, you will have both a recruitment and a retention problem," he explained. But Crawford added that he remains wary of the administration's intentions.

Reduced quality of services was also on the mind of several hundred Medgar Evers students who walked out of class at midday on October 17, amid chants of "I am a Medgar Evers College student!" and "Pollard, Pollard you come out, face the students you sold out!" The protesters cited a number of grievances: the fact that the school's computer labs were closed for the first three weeks of the semester, fewer tutors available in the Learning Center, and class sizes that are already too large.

"We want [Matthew] Goldstein to come down from 80th Street



Clinton Crawford, chair of the PSC chapter at Medgar Evers College

and deal with this problem," said student leader Evangeline Byars, who noted that CUNY Chancellor Goldstein had given strong backing to Pollard in the past.

Camille McIntosh, a student government officer and another organizer with Concerned Students of Medgar Evers College, said she and others went from classroom to classroom before the protest urging students to come out and make their voices heard.

LEARNING CENTER

"You can send out an e-mail or hand out a leaflet, but having personal, one-on-one conversations is more impactful," said McIntosh.

Michael Chance, director of the campus Learning Center, said the students were right to be upset. Due to cuts to its budget and the loss of more than 90% of its grant funding since 2009, the learning center has had to cut back on its hours and the number of tutors it employs, Chance told *Clarion*.

"[Students] know when they are not getting good services," Chance said. "That's why they are protesting."

The Learning Center, which offers tutoring to the 85% of MEC students who need academic skills support, needs more reserves, Chance said. "[Students] have the ability, but they need the support to keep on going." Middle States officials have specifically criticized MEC's administration for underfunding the Learning Center.

FINANCIAL FOUL-UP

A number of protesting students were also vexed by an October 10 notice from the Bursar's Office, notifying them that they were behind on tuition payments that were supposed to have been covered by financial aid. "This will drop me out of classes," one student told *Our Time Press* after being told that she owed \$961. But the MEC administration has not followed up on its demands for payment since the October 17 protest, and has offered no clear explanation for the snafu. "It just went away [and] students didn't pay," Byars said in December.

In November, the Chancellery sent a presidential review team to Medgar Evers to evaluate the work of President Pollard and his administration. The team's charge was to hear from all the stakeholders in the school, but Cuffee says the process was compromised by the selection of its chair, Dr. Frank Pogue, who had hired MEC Provost Howard Johnson when Pogue was interim president of Chicago State University. Cuffee said there is no known deadline for the CUNY review team's report, and it was unclear whether Chancellor Goldstein will make its findings public.

On December 1, Dr. Ellie Fogarty of the Middle States Commission, came to MEC and spoke at a meeting attended by about 75 faculty members and administrators, as well as CUNY Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Alexandra Logue. Two days later, at a meeting of MEC's Faculty Senate, community leaders, such as Councilmembers Al Vann and Charles Barron and former US Rep. Major Owens, condemned Pollard and Johnson for putting the school's future at risk.

"It's not a situation to take lightly," Crawford, the PSC chapter chair, told *Clarion*. "We've got a failed administration and they're going to be gone. But we've got to make sure Medgar Evers keeps its accreditation."

After Sandy, it's Mutual Aid 101

By SARAH JAFFE

On Friday morning, November 30, a group of Brooklyn College students and faculty, dressed in layers of denim and sweatshirts, piled into a van headed to Far Rockaway for a day of hard labor on homes flooded by Superstorm Sandy.

The "Sandy Solidarity Caravan" was organized by Emma Francis-Snyder and S. Thompson, members of the Brooklyn College Student Union. The van rental was paid for by the PSC chapter to support the joint effort, and Jocelyn Wills, associate professor of history, was at the wheel.

The group of 10 volunteers was headed out to work with Respond and Rebuild, an organization of experienced disaster relief volunteers doing demolition and cleanup of flooded homes. "Many people's lives will never be the same," Francis-Snyder told *Clarion*. "To get money to rebuild their homes they'll have to make endless phone calls, file paperwork that's never [considered] correct, and run around in circles trying to achieve some sense of normalcy that will take years at best." The students and faculty who joined the caravan said they knew that donating a day of work wasn't going to make people's lives normal again, but they hoped it would provide some concrete help and perhaps help victims feel less alone.

DEMOLITION WORK

For PSC members Carolina Bank-Muñoz and Emily Molina, both assistant professors of sociology, this was their first time doing demolition work, but some of the students involved had done it before: Francis-Snyder spent 2008 and 2009 doing construction in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina, and she and Thompson were involved early on with Occupy Sandy, the relief effort spearheaded by members of the Occupy Wall Street movement. Respond and Rebuild is one of several groups connected with Occupy Sandy, which have taken up the challenge of recovery work where official response has been lacking.

The Brooklyn College community has been involved in various ways in Sandy relief, Thompson explained, such as coordinating donations of money and items. The student union took up the task of providing "people power," helping to bring volunteers to the Rockaways to do demolition work. Given what she knew about FEMA and other disaster relief agencies from her time in Louisiana, Francis-Snyder said, "I knew that if other people didn't do the work, it wouldn't get done."

"The effects of Hurricane Sandy are already fading from people's memory," she said, though the recovery will no doubt take years, and residents are still cleaning out flood-damaged homes. "If we provide people an easy way to plug in and

BC faculty, students join rebuilding effort



Brooklyn College student Emma Francis-Snyder was ready to get to work after the "Sandy Solidarity Caravan" arrived in Far Rockaway on Nov. 30.

provide their services, more people will sign up and keep coming."

In Far Rockaway, Respond and Rebuild had established a hub for volunteers with tables piled with safety equipment and shovels, brooms and crowbars stacked against a wall. The Brooklyn College group was split into separate work crews and sent to two houses with a wheelbarrow full of supplies each. In one house, no work had been done yet and the crew had to completely demolish the basement, pulling down wall tiles and the drop ceiling (and finding quite a few spiders and bugs in the process).

In the other, belonging to Joe Nathans White, demolition had already begun on the first floor and the crew was there to finish the job, pulling up tiled floors and knocking out the remains of soggy Drywall, pulling nails from the wall and cleaning up the mess. White bought his house almost 40 years ago. He's retired now and had planned to sell the home, but his children wanted to keep it. His daughter, Melissa, a local schoolteacher, arrived as the crew worked and talked with them about the school where she works and its problems with mold. The flooded first-floor apartment had been hers, and she was staying with her boyfriend in another part of Queens, leaving her with a two-hour commute to her job in the Rockaways.

For Molina, who is in her first semester teaching at Brooklyn College, this was the moment that stuck with her – meeting the family, hearing their stories. As a newcomer to New York, she felt that she didn't



Volunteers from Brooklyn College divided into two work groups each of which helped demolish a flood-damaged home. From left: PSC member Emily Molina and students Emma Francis-Snyder, Saar Shemesh and Andy Orenzo.

know the affected communities very well, but wanted to do something to help mitigate the crisis.

Connecting with the affected communities was very important to everyone on the caravan, and on the way out to the Rockaways, Francis-Snyder and Thompson facilitated a discussion of the practice of mutual aid.

HOW TO RESPOND

"Mutual aid is the exchange of resources and services in a way that is both voluntary and mutually beneficial to those involved. It's really important to go into this work with a grounded understanding that everyone deserves to live a dignified life," Francis-Snyder explained. "I'm not doing this because I feel guilty, and neither should you."

Housing issues and inequalities are at the center of Molina's academic work, and that contributed to her desire to get involved with

the caravan. "I study foreclosures – disproportionate foreclosures," she told *Clarion*. "Some neighborhoods are more impacted than others and there's a reason for that. It's similar...to why some neighborhoods were more impacted by Sandy: I see both of those things as social disasters. There's always going to be uneven impact of disasters, because of how we organize socially."

Thompson pointed out that this kind of inequality is at the core of the problems laid bare by Sandy. "The hurricane revealed the crisis and made it more apparent to the people outside the communities that were experiencing it," she said. Inequality showed in the construction of the homes in Far Rockaway and in which neighborhoods had seen better responses from FEMA and the Red Cross. The response of volunteer groups with far fewer resources, like Respond and Rebuild, Francis-Snyder said, has been superior in many ways to the well-resourced institutions.

"It was a great initiative by students to do this. I was really happy that they were initiating something and that the union could support and participate in it," Bank-Muñoz said. "The larger idea of relief and the larger concepts of...how to build infrastructure and community," she added, "are really complicated and challenging." A true practice of mutual aid is difficult to achieve, said Bank-Muñoz, particularly in a city riven with inequality and with this scale of unmet need. It's also hard, she added, "to build a long-term relationship when most people are only going to be able to go sporadically." But while these issues need thought and discussion, she concluded, some things are clear: "People need mold out of their homes." She was glad to help.

CUNY CONNECTION

Student Union members said that the austerity policies and privatization that make recovery hard for Sandy survivors are also hitting CUNY. "It's important [that] we, especially members of a public educational institution, show support to the greater community," Francis-Snyder said. Students, faculty and staff have asked the public to support them in their fights against budget cuts in the past, so giving back through Sandy recovery is another kind of mutual aid. "Brooklyn College students, faculty and staff come from different boroughs, and it's important to show that we care and are really willing to be part of the solution," she said.

For faculty members, dealing with the impact of the storm has been part of their daily teaching practice, and made them feel that they had to do more to help. "Brooklyn College students themselves are in crisis," Bank-Muñoz explained. "I'm dealing with students who have lost homes, have lost cars, can't get to class, have jobs that have burned to the ground."

Molina agreed: "I have a few students who were so highly impacted by the storm that it's like night and day, our experiences are still night and day. Seeing my students go through certain things and hearing their stories made me feel that I have to get out there and see for myself."

For everyone involved, the day reconfirmed their commitment to continue to be part of the recovery effort. On the trip back, the students and faculty, exhausted and covered in Drywall dust, discussed ideas for fundraising for other caravans, talked about what they learned from working on the flooded homes, and made plans for future organizing campaigns.

For Bank-Muñoz, being part of the recovery effort beyond Brooklyn College campus is part of a broader social movement practice: "What draws me to it is struggle, the capacity for struggle to change the world."

Sarah Jaffe

Sarah Jaffe

Challenged by a warmer world

By JOHN TARLETON

Superstorm Sandy highlighted the many challenges posed by human-induced climate change. CUNY faculty, in turn, are helping shape how our society responds with their research, teaching and policy analysis.

Reginald Blake

City Tech
Associate Professor of Physics

Reginald Blake decided to study meteorology when he came to the United States as a teenager in 1981, a year after a Category 5 hurricane devastated his native Jamaica. Blake later earned a PhD in geophysics (specializing in hydrometeorology) and went on to become a faculty member at CUNY, where he spends his days reviewing the latest satellite remotely sensed data on storms, vegetation, sea ice, soil moisture, ocean color, air pollution and more. Blake is a member of NOAA-CREST, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Cooperative Remote Sensing Science and Technology Center, a joint project of a dozen colleges and universities that is led by CCNY.

"We use satellites to study the heartbeat of the Earth," says Blake who works with his fellow scientists to create increasingly sophisticated computer models of future changes in global weather systems.

In 2008 Blake was named to the 13-member New York City Panel on Climate Change (NYCPC), whose comprehensive 2010 report ("Climate Change Adaptation in New York City: Building a Risk Management Response") sometimes reads like a news account of Superstorm Sandy's impact two years later.

As an active member of the NPCC and also of the Climate Change Impacts group at NASA-Goddard Institute for Space Studies at Columbia University, Blake expects New York to become warmer and wetter in the coming century, facing both rising sea levels and increasingly intense storms.

When Blake looks to the future, he also thinks of his own field and the need to replenish its aging ranks with a diverse new generation of scientists. Blake heads the Black Male Initiative at City Tech, the only BMI program at CUNY with a STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) focus.

He is also the principal investigator for two National Science Foundation grants aimed at developing the scientists of the future. One makes possible a yearlong program for CUNY undergraduates who do faculty-supervised research and travel to major conferences with their faculty mentors. Many past participants have gone on to pursue graduate degrees in the sciences, Blake told *Clarion*. The other program brings the geosciences to life for students at a middle school in Bushwick and two high schools in downtown Brooklyn.

CUNY's climate scholars



Catherine Seavitt Nordenson, a CCNY associate professor of landscape architecture, wants to adapt NYC's coastline to the realities of climate change.

"I'm on a crusade," Blake says. "This is a great opportunity to capture young minds and teach them about how this dynamic Earth works."

Marco Tedesco

City College
Associate Professor of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences

Marco Tedesco pitches a tent each summer near the top of the world to study the Greenland ice sheet. The ice sheet, two to three kilometers thick and nearly the size of Mexico, has been frozen in place for millennia – but it is now melting much faster than scientists anticipated even a decade ago.

A full melt of Greenland's ice sheet would cause sea levels to rise by 23 feet. This is considered unlikely to happen for at least the next couple of centuries, but even a partial collapse of the ice sheet could have an enormous impact around the world.

"If you keep increasing the sea level, you can really be inundated when there is a big storm," says Tedesco. "Everything adds up."

For Greenland, this summer was off the charts. At one point in July, 97% of the ice sheet was experiencing melting, a level unprecedented since satellite tracking of the summer melt began in 1979.

"2012 was a Goliath year," Tedesco says. "It was like a basketball giant walking around Times Square and everyone looking at him."

This year Tedesco was on the ice sheet for two weeks as a part of a six-person scientific team. They measured the depth of lakes created by the summer melt. They also dug holes in the ice to place antennae that measure how fast the ice sheet is moving toward the sea. For Tedesco, the chance to do this kind of direct research is deeply rewarding.

'Speed bumps' that could slow giant waves.

"Your world is a two-meter by one-meter tent. You can hear the ice breaking," Tedesco recalled. "It requires so much discipline and so much work. There's a completely different satisfaction getting your results from the field than from solving a problem at your computer."

Melissa Checker

Queens College
Associate Professor of Urban Studies

As the modern environmental movement took root in the 1970s and '80s, cleaning up remaining toxic waste sites became a top priority. Legislation was passed and hundreds of Superfund and other high-priority sites have been designated for cleanup.

In recent years, climate change has absorbed many environmentalists' attention. When Superstorm Sandy hit, Melissa Checker says, two kinds of environmental crises converged when unrepaired Superfund sites on Staten Island's North Shore were swamped by the storm surge.

"It's really scary," she said of the toxic brew that Sandy spread around.

Checker is author of *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town* (NYU Press, 2005). In recent years she has been studying how big, City-backed development projects in New York intersect with community concerns about sustainability and environmental justice. She says it's important for climate justice activists to make common cause with low-lying communities at risk of seeing toxic spills from an earlier era dispersed into the wider environment by future storm surges.

Checker told *Clarion* that North Shore residents had repeatedly inquired with City officials in recent years about the threat posed by rising sea levels, but had received only pat answers. In November, in the wake of the storm, North Shore residents turned out in large numbers at a public meeting to denounce City-backed plans for building the world's largest Ferris wheel on the North Shore as part of a larger hotel and retail complex. Many local residents would rather see public funds used to mitigate the environmental risks they face.

"The storm brought everything into high relief," says Checker.

Catherine Seavitt Nordenson

City College
Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture

Catherine Seavitt Nordenson's phone began to ring soon after Superstorm Sandy inundated the New York City area with a 14-foot storm surge. People wanted to talk with her about how New York City could be reshaped to limit damage from such storms in the future.

Seavitt is co-author, with Guy Nordenson and Adam Yarinsky, of the 2010 book *On the Water: Palisade Bay*, which explores how natural systems could be enhanced to better protect the city from higher sea levels and an increased risk of dangerous storms generated by climate change.

The book in turn spawned "Rising Currents: Projects for New York's Waterfront," an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art that ran for seven months. The exhibit spurred wide public interest, and was visited by a number of local and regional policy makers.

In the wake of Sandy, as debate heats up over whether to build costly sea gates to thwart future storm surges, City and State officials want to know more about Seavitt's ideas.

She advocates measures such as constructing an archipelago of small islands in the shallow flats of the Upper Bay of New York Harbor, which extends over 20 square miles from the Verrazano Narrows to the Brooklyn Bridge, restoring

the region's once-prolific oyster and mollusk beds to promote wave-attenuating natural reefs, and reestablishing areas of coastal wetlands. "The enhancement of natural ecosystems helps create resilience," she explains: features like these would act as "speed bumps" and help reduce wave velocity and damage from storm surges in the future.

In her vision, functionality could be wed to beauty with the modified Upper Harbor serving as a park on the water, serving people from across the region. "There are 364 other days a year when we want to be living in a green, wonderful city with a high quality of life," Seavitt says.

Kim Curran

Bronx Community College Center for Sustainable Energy
Assistant to the Director & Instructor in Photovoltaics

Shifting to renewable forms of energy, like solar and wind, in the coming decades is widely seen as crucial in deciding how much worse climate change is going to get. This transition toward a low-carbon economy in turn creates opportunities for new businesses and "green collar" jobs – and teachers like Kim Curran are opening the doors for students who want to get into these fields.

Curran teaches introductory photovoltaics at Bronx Community College's Center for Sustainable Energy (CSE), a certificate-granting institution housed on the main BCC campus (see csebcc.org). CSE's solar power classes help students master everything from the basics of electricity to how to navigate City regulations that govern solar-power installation. Classes like the one Curran teaches attract people in fields from construction to information technology, looking to take their careers in new directions, as well as students from other nations who are eager to bring solar power back to their own countries.

Curran left her previous career in the telecommunications industry to learn everything she could about solar power. When she's not teaching, she works as the assistant to the Director of CSE and helps consult students on their career paths and opportunities. Being in solar, she says, gives her the chance to do something "more meaningful."

In Curran's estimation, solar power is the key energy source for a more sustainable future, even more than wind: "There's so much more of this kind of energy than anything else," she told *Clarion*.

"Most of our students look to this as a new and growing industry that is also the only sensible environmental solution," adds Curran. "They love what they are doing. It's a fabulous, fabulous field."

Research, teaching and policy analysis.

Solar power emerges as key to a sustainable future.

Pat Arnov

Fast-food workers demand rights

By SARAH JAFFE

Pamela Flood works at Burger King in Flatbush, Brooklyn, to pay the bills while she puts herself through school. She's studying to be a medical assistant and holds down two jobs – two, because the \$7.25 an hour that Burger King pays just isn't enough for Flood to support her three kids and pay her tuition.

On November 29, Flood and about 200 other fast-food workers across the city of New York went out on strike, calling for a raise to \$15 an hour and recognition of their independent union, the Fast Food Workers Committee.

\$7.25 AN HOUR

"I'm out here just to show people that you don't have to take \$7.25 an hour for your hard work," Flood said, while joining other strikers on a picket line outside the Wendy's at Fulton Mall. "You deserve better than that. It's not only about the money, it's about respect. When you're making so little money, people don't respect you. They think you're not smart, and that's not the case. It could be anybody that's getting \$7.25 for any reason."

Indeed, though the common perception of fast-food jobs is that they're for young people or students, the median age in the industry is 28, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. What's more, women make up two-thirds of fast-food

One-day strike makes history



Pamela Flood stands with fast-food workers across the city to strike for better pay.

workers, and their median age is 32.

The organizing campaign among fast-food workers is being led by New York Communities for Change (NYCC). That makes it an unusual workplace organizing drive, led by a community organization rather than a labor union. In the last few years, NYCC has also worked to organize grocery store workers, car wash workers, and child-care providers. A week after the fast-food strike, workers from these

industries rallied with members of other unions, including the PSC, in a December 6 labor protest in Times Square. The protest connected the "fiscal cliff" confrontation in Washington with broader issues of economic justice, demanding an end to tax cuts for the rich and an economy that works for all.

"It's a hard road to hoe to organize collective action in the fast-food industry," said Frances Fox Piven, professor of sociology and politi-

cal science at the CUNY Graduate Center. "They're small sites, a lot of turnover in the labor force." The citywide approach of NYCC, she said, is "the way that it has to be done. The question is whether they can do social-movement-style strikes with community support and the support of the unions."

FLEXIBILITY

Joshua Freeman, professor of history at Queens College, the Graduate Center and the Murphy Institute, told *Clarion*, "This approach shows a kind of flexibility by the mainstream New York labor movement that I don't think you would have seen a couple of decades ago. It's the kind of thing you're going to need if you're going to organize fast food. You're going to have to bring in other kinds of players: religious groups, political organizations, neighborhood groups, and it's still going to be tough."

The one-day strike by the fast-food workers parallels the one-day strikes that have been happening at Walmart stores and warehouses around the country and Ruth Milkman of the Graduate Center and the Murphy Institute sees parallels between the community-based strategies of today's organizers and pre-Wagner Act forms of organizing. "If you go back to the pre-New Deal era, this was very common," Milkman said.

Freeman agreed, pointing out that corporations' aggressive anti-union

tactics have all but eliminated the federal protections for unions under the National Labor Relations Act. Companies routinely fire pro-union workers, in violation of the law, then drag out labor board proceedings as long as possible and pay the occasional fine as a cost of doing business. "We're almost in a post-New Deal situation, that's why you do need different tactics and strategies than 30 or 40 years ago," Freeman said. "I think these folks are trying to feel their way toward that."

The one-day strike, in particular, is proving to be an effective tactic: Marty Davis, an employee at the Wendy's on Fulton Street, said that their boss is nicer to the workers now, and Truvon Shim, who'd had his hours slashed after taking a few days off to deal with the damage Superstorm Sandy did to his Far Rockaway home, was back working two hours last week after walking off the job.

SHORT STRIKES

Milkman noted that it makes sense to use short strikes as a tactic. "The law does supposedly protect what's called concerted activity," she noted, "so you get all the publicity, and people don't lose income. It's not like they have a chance of getting an immediate victory. If they went out for a long time, [the company] would just replace people."

New York City's fast-food workers are feeling good about the strikes. Davis said that when workers saw those who went on strike walk back in the day after, with community leaders by their side, it made people realize that they could do it, too: "Now, there's more people on board with going on strike."

GOP springs 'right-to-work' in Michigan

By JANE SLAUGHTER

Ten thousand angry unionists gathered outside Michigan's Capitol building on December 11, denouncing the sudden passage of so-called "right-to-work" legislation. Several dozen protesters sat down in the Capitol Rotunda, risking arrest, and more were outside the governor's office. Three school districts were forced to close schools because so many teachers were taking the day off.

Despite the anger and the chants, the legislature finished its approval of the anti-union bills, and Governor Rick Snyder signed them the next day.

SHOCKED

Michigan unionists had been shocked just seven days earlier, when Snyder announced that he would seek passage of the right-to-work measures. His legislative allies quickly did their part, passing the public- and private-sector bills without hearings as police used pepper spray to clear the Capitol of protesting union members.

Snyder had previously said right-to-work was too divisive and was therefore not on his agenda. Such

Big donors target unions

laws outlaw union contracts that require all represented workers to pay dues or a comparable fee. Instead, they encourage employees to reap the benefits of a union contract – higher wages, better benefits, protection against unfair firing – without contributing to the organization that makes them possible. The real goal of right-to-work laws is simply to weaken unions.

United Auto Workers President Bob King, who has 151,000 members and 190,000 retirees in the state, said the governor's about-face "blind-sided" him. But the plan to make Michigan the 24th right-to-work state was long brewing. With 17.5% union density, the fifth-highest in the country, and a record of voting for Democratic presidents, Michigan was a tempting target for such billionaire-funded national groups as Americans for Prosperity (bankrolled by the Koch brothers) and for the state's home-grown billionaire Richard DeVos, of the Amway fortune.

Americans for Prosperity's Michigan chapter quadrupled its

spending in 2010, the year Snyder was elected, to \$1.1 million. The Mackinac Center, a longtime right-wing think tank in the state, spent \$5.7 million last year, and stepped

A longtime labor bastion is left reeling.

up its game in December to support Snyder's move. DeVos funds both groups (see tinyurl.com/Fang-on-MI-Right). Michigan Democratic Party Chair Mark Brewer dates the campaign for right-to-work to at least 2007, based on a video that shows former Michigan Republican Party Chair Ron Weiser speaking at a Tea Party meeting in August. Weiser, now finance chair of the Republican National Committee, describes meeting with DeVos, former Michigan Governor John Engler (now with the Business Roundtable) and representatives from Americans for Prosperity on a multi-year strategy to pass right-to-work in traditionally pro-labor Michigan.

Though Republicans had won solid control of the state government by January 2011, Michigan's anti-union forces at first held off

on right-to-work, perhaps warned by the tumult next door in Wisconsin that winter. Instead, they pursued a piecemeal strategy, appointing "emergency managers" to run financially troubled cities and throw out union contracts; taking away teachers' automatic dues deductions; rescinding domestic partner benefits for public employees; defining university research assistants, who were organizing, as non-workers; and passing a host of other measures that wouldn't rile everyone at once.

To head off right-to-work and to nullify these other laws that interfered with collective bargaining, the UAW's Bob King, the Michigan Education Association and other union leaders developed a plan to pass a constitutional amendment, Proposal 2, that would have made collective bargaining a constitutional right in Michigan.

PROPOSITION 2

But Proposal 2 went down to defeat, 57% to 42%. It fell victim to a \$30 million disinformation campaign, with ads citing the sanctity of the constitution and warning that the bill would prevent school districts from firing child molesters.

Campaign leaders for the pro-union amendment were reluctant to specify any particular laws that Proposal 2 would have outlawed, according to Mark O'Keefe, a staffer for the Detroit Federation of Teachers – presumably afraid that any specifics were likely to offend someone. O'Keefe thought the vagueness "created uncertainty and mistrust" among voters, and that a ballot measure with a simple ban on right-to-work would have stood a better chance. That is one of several theories under discussion among reeling activists.

NO REFERENDUM

While voters in Ohio repealed an anti-public-union measure through a referendum in 2011, a maneuver by Michigan legislators was aimed at preventing such a vote against right-to-work: they attached appropriations to the right-to-work bills, and in Michigan, money bills can't be repealed by the voters.

Meanwhile, the day after right-to-work was signed into law, Michigan's House of Representatives gave some idea of the full scope of its right-wing agenda. One day before the Newtown, Conn., school massacre, Michigan's House passed a bill allowing concealed weapons to be carried in public schools.

Jane Slaughter is editor of Labor Notes. A longer version of this article, with a fuller analysis, is online at LaborNotes.org.

Sandy relief resources for PSC members

If you are a PSC member dealing with losses resulting from Superstorm Sandy, please fill out the web form at tinyurl.com/PSC-Sandy-Form. The PSC is using this form to connect members with the help they need. You can also call PSC's Sandy Relief Hotline for assistance, at 646-459-6888. After the union receives your call or form submission, you will be contacted with potential resources and information.

NYSUT AID

Our statewide affiliate, NYSUT, has established a Storm Relief Fund that aims to provide small grants to affected members. And some PSC members and staff have trained to help you register for FEMA assistance.

The process of securing FEMA aid can be confusing, so trained assistance can often make a big difference. For example, it's crucial to know that in order to receive certain types of financial aid from FEMA, most aid applicants first need to apply for a Disaster Loan from the US Small Business Administration. This is true of almost everyone, not just small business owners, and is a requirement under government regulations.

If you receive a US Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loan application from FEMA when you register for help, you must complete the application and return it to the SBA to be considered for FEMA assistance beyond the disaster temporary housing program. This is true even if you don't want a loan, or you don't think you'll qualify.

PSC members or staff who've received training in FEMA procedures can help you get past these bumps in the road.

OTHER HELP

The PSC has also compiled a list of web links and sources of information about other programs that can help with repairs and rebuilding, financial losses, food assistance, counseling, etc. These include the Governor's Disaster Homeownership Repair and Rebuilding Fund; the NYC Rapid Repairs Program; and assistance programs from the New York City Central Labor Council and CUNY's Work/Life Program. This information source list is on the PSC website at psc-cuny.org/sandy-relief-links.

In addition, the PSC's Environmental Health and Safety Committee is offering a workshop on mold (see item at right) and is distributing respirators to those who may need them while doing clean-up on their homes. More information on the respirators, which are not for use in all circumstances, is available at tinyurl.com/PSC-Sandy-respirators.

- PH

Clarion's labor news awards

By CLARION STAFF

In 2012 *Clarion* was named as the best labor union newspaper in New York City and best NYSUT local newspaper in its circulation class. These awards were among several top prizes the PSC newspaper won at the local, state and national levels for excellence in reporting, opinion writing, and graphic design.

"PSC members have high expectations for their union newspaper," said *Clarion* editor Peter Hogness, "and we do our best to meet them."

The PSC website was also named as the best among the largest locals in NYSUT.

TOUGH COMPETITION

Here in New York City, *Clarion* won first place for General Excellence among the largest unions in NYC from the Metro New York Labor Communications Council.

Describing *Clarion* as "solid in every way," the judges commended the PSC paper as "lovely to look at" and "well-organized" and having "writing [that] is excellent and geared to the union membership."

The breadth of *Clarion's* coverage also made a strong impression. "We like the show of solidarity with other unions," the judges concluded,

Best union paper in NYC

"the inclusion of some international news, the extensive coverage on adjunct health care, the spread on PSC members taking union action. And so nice to see poetry!"

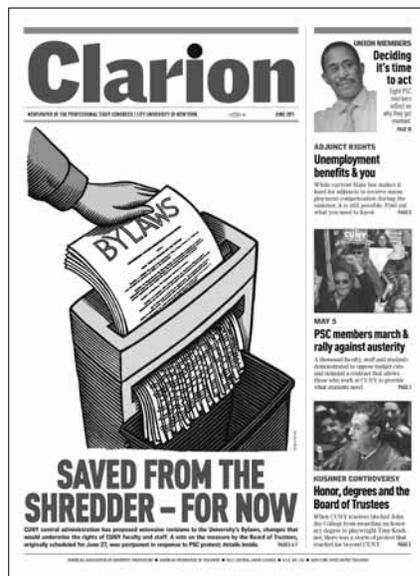
Breadth of paper's coverage impresses judges.

Metro Labor awarded first places for Best Reporting to *Clarion* Associate Editor John Tarleton for his "particularly compelling" on-the-ground coverage of the role University of Wisconsin teaching assistants played in the February 2011 occupation of the Wisconsin State Capitol by labor union members and their allies.

The takeover came in response to Gov. Scott Walker's surprise move to gut the collective bargaining rights of public-sector employees. Tarleton also won first place for Best Reporting from Metro Labor New York last year.

DEBUNKING

Metro Labor's first place for Best Editorial went to Sunshine Ludder and Chloe Tribich for an article that debunked the myth that wealthy residents would flee New York if Albany increased their marginal



tax rates in order to help address the deficit crisis caused by the 2008 Wall Street crash and the subsequent downturn in the economy.

Calling the article "timely and counterintuitive," the judges saluted Ludder and Tribich for us[ing] unexpected facts to support a strong conclusion, as a good editorial should.

In addition to winning a first-place award for Best Publication from New York State United Teach-

ers, *Clarion* also won three other first prizes from NYSUT, the PSC's state affiliate.

Michelle Fine, a distinguished professor of social psychology at the Graduate Center, won first place for Best Opinion Writing for a bold, uncompromising essay proclaiming the importance of the public sector to the life of a vibrant, democratic society. The piece was based on the text of Fine's May 2011 commencement address at the Graduate Center and then adapted for use in *Clarion*.

NATIONAL AWARDS

Clarion's designer, Margarita Aguilar, won NYSUT's first place award for Best Design. And the PSC's revamped website was also recognized by NYSUT with a first place award for Best Website, to longtime PSC webmaster Bill Friedheim.

Clarion's prize-winning ways in New York carried over to the annual nationwide competition sponsored by the Washington D.C.-based International Labor Communications Association. Competing against union local newspapers from across the country, Aguilar won first place for Best Design while Tarleton took first place for Best News Story for his Wisconsin coverage.

PSC-CUNY Research Awards deadline extended

On December 11 PSC President Barbara Bowen and Vice Chancellor for Research Gillian Small wrote to CUNY faculty announcing that the deadline for applications for PSC-CUNY research awards had been extended to January 9:

In response to the many inquiries we have had from faculty whose professional as well as personal lives were turned upside down by Superstorm Sandy, we have extended the deadline for applications for PSC-CUNY Research Awards to January 9. Applications must be submitted electronically by midnight on Wednesday, January 9, 2013. The new deadline applies to all applicants, regardless of whether the storm had a direct effect on your work.

We encourage applicants whose

lives were not disrupted by Sandy, however, to submit their applications by the original deadline of December 15. Doing so will allow the selection panels to begin their time-consuming work of submitting each application to careful review. For more information about the PSC-CUNY Research Awards, please consult the CUNY Research Foundation website and Article 25 of the collective bargaining agreement.

We wish all applicants well with their submissions, and extend our best wishes especially to those who lost irreplaceable notes and research in the storm. We hope that the extension to January 9 gives all applicants a fair opportunity to receive support for their research and creative work.

'Mold in the Workplace'

In the best of times at CUNY, mold contamination of old leaky buildings is an ongoing problem. Moreover, the hazard posed by mold has dramatically "grown" since Hurricane Sandy and will continue to challenge us through the coming damp, cold winter.

If you missed the Environmental Health and Safety Watchdogs' useful and informative workshop on "Mold in the Workplace," given by Dave Newman of New York Committee

for Occupational Safety & Health (NYCOSH), you can schedule the workshop for your campus. Just let the Watchdogs know and they can work with you to set one up.

While the mold workshop focuses on the workplace, it will also be useful if you or others you know are facing mold problems during the Sandy cleanup.

To schedule a workshop, e-mail hswatchdogs@psccmail.org, or call 212-354-1252.

TEMPORARY BROOKLYN OFFICE FOR TRS

The Teachers Retirement System office at 55 Water Street is still closed, due to continuing effects of Superstorm Sandy. In the meantime, TRS has set up a temporary walk-in center at 65 Court Street in Brooklyn and is still accepting appointments from 8:30 am to 5 pm, Monday to Friday, except on

official New York City holidays. The mailing address is unchanged: TRS, 55 Water Street, New York, NY 10041. (If you are sending vital information, use certified mail.) The TRS call center can be reached at 888-869-2877. For further updates check the TRS website at www.trsnyc.org.

Clarion JANUARY 2013

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The national Pathways petition

Signers say why moratorium is needed

RAFIA ZAFAR

Washington University in St. Louis
Associate Dean for Diversity
Professor of English and of African & African American Studies

As a member of the City College Class of 1975, and a full professor and associate dean of the graduate school of an elite university, I urge CUNY to abandon this proposed curriculum and work with the thousands of faculty who are dedicated to their CUNY students. It was those very types of dedicated CUNY faculty that started me on the path to my position today. Don't shortchange CUNY students at the very time more, not less, education is needed.

WILLIAM NORTH

Carleton College
Associate Professor of History

Curricular changes should involve extensive and genuine faculty input; these clearly did not, and it seems clear that coercion is being used to implement changes in a way that violates the very essence of intellectual freedom and the mission of educational institutions.

MICHAEL GRAHAM

University of Akron
Professor of History

Cutting back general education requirements in the name of "degree completion" only dilutes the product, and, in this case, expanding the caste system in higher education. Elite institutions (and the students who can afford them) get one product, and middle- or working-class students get a much poorer one.

MARGARET VENDRYES

Wellesley College
Visiting Lecturer, Art

I was tenured at York and the Graduate Center in 2006. Although I am no longer on the faculty at CUNY, I continue to support its premise to offer quality education to the city's students. This program is a disgrace.

ERIC GAWISER

Rutgers University
Associate Professor of Physics & Astronomy
CUNY is a great institution; I have colleagues there whose research and teaching I greatly respect. If this behavior continues, they will surely move elsewhere, and CUNY's faculty will decrease in quality, further harming its educational product.

RAFAEL PEÑAS CRUZ

London School of Economics
Coordinating Language Teacher
Having been informed by colleagues in New York about the Pathways plan that CUNY's management team is trying to introduce, I am concerned about the long-term consequences that such changes may have for the working-class students who attend CUNY. It is essential that they receive as good an education as do students at Ivy League universities. I fear



that Pathways offers a diluted education that will not prepare them for the challenges of an ever-changing world.

FRIEDA STAHL

California State University, Los Angeles
Professor of Physics Emeritus

As a BA graduate of Hunter College, and as a former dean of my employing university responsible for undergraduate curriculum development, I am appalled at this proposal to cheapen the entire college learning experience.

GORDON AUBRECHT

Ohio State University
Professor of Physics

A college education is meant to help develop and nurture critical thinking. In science, laboratory work is essential to supplement theory. Neither experiment nor theory is sufficient alone.

SHELLEY STREEBY

University of California, San Diego
Professor of Literature and of Ethnic Studies

After 20 years in the classroom with students, I know how important that time in class is, for students from working-class backgrounds like myself especially. Don't short them in the name of austerity! Listen to your faculty....

PAUL ELITZIK

School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Director, Student Publications

I am an alumnus of CCNY who has benefited from the excellent teaching for which the college was famous. I am distressed to see the curriculum watered down and teaching devalued.

NASSER RABBAT

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Aga Kahn Professor of Islamic Architecture
I agree with the comment that Benno [Schmidt] would not have done this at Yale. A further sepa-

ration between classes of the educated is no solution.

CARA CILANO

University of North Carolina Wilmington
Associate Professor of English

The General Administration of the UNC system is attempting to push through an eerily similar "Pathways" initiative against which we must also take a stand.

JOEL BERKOWITZ

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Director, Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies

As a CUNY Graduate Center alumnus (Theatre, 1995), and a former adjunct of several CUNY colleges, I applaud my colleagues for standing up for the integrity of CUNY's educational mission.

ANA ZENTELLA

University of California, San Diego
Professor of Ethnic Studies, Emerita

The destructive nature of Pathways is of great concern to me because I was an undergrad at Hunter and a professor there for over 30 years, and was also [on the faculty] at the CUNY Graduate Center. I am in the Hunter Alumni Hall of Fame – but I will change my will and leave nothing to Hunter/CUNY unless the cuts and intimidation end, and CUNY honors its commitment to excellent public education.

ROBERT VADEN-GOAD

Southern Connecticut State University
Associate Professor of Mathematics

At what point did society come to accept that board members know more about educating students than those who do it all day, every day?

SHARON BARNES

University of Toledo
Associate Prof. of Interdisciplinary Studies

I am concerned about similar agendas here in Ohio. It is getting more and more difficult to deliver a quality education to students.

We need state support for education! Investment in young people is key to our future.

EDWARD SUNDERHAUS

Cincinnati State University
Instructor of Physics

As a physics instructor, I am appalled at how little science students have learned prior to coming to the college. It is only through hands-on experience that students can learn any of the natural sciences. There is no "real" science learning without labs.

STEVEN STOLL

Fordham University
Associate Professor of History

A college education is not a Pop-Tart! It's slower food and delivers more in nutrition than a quick fill on empty calories. I stand with the CUNY faculty in resisting this shortcut to budget savings.

DOUGLAS MAO

Johns Hopkins University
Professor of English
Past President, Modernist Studies Association

The first two decades of my life were thoroughly bound up with CUNY. I attended Hunter College High School; my mother worked for the CUNY administration. And I grew up in a largely working-class environment. Since then – in part through my service in the late 1990s on the board of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies – I have observed several attempts to diminish the quality of education at this great university, each of them driven by the belief that real intellectual attainment is not to be demanded of the largely working-class students CUNY serves. This view undercuts the deeper values promoted by higher education – and, in the long run, helps diminish the practical value of the college degree in the world beyond the university.

LESLIE SHARKEY

University of Minnesota
Associate Professor of Veterinary Clinical Sciences

Reasons for poor graduation rates are multifactorial and difficult to assess and address. Reducing the quality of the education in response is essentially putting a piece of masking tape over your "check engine" light and expecting the problem to go away because you can't see the warning light anymore. Do the hard work of real problem-solving to help students achieve.

CLAUDETTE LEE

University of Nebraska at Omaha
Assistant Professor of Social Work

I would not want this to happen at my university.

SHERRYL KLEINMAN

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
Professor of Sociology

This is a violation of faculty governance and will result in a two-tier system for the economically privileged and the economically disadvantaged. This will only result in more inequality in society at large.

FRED DONNER

University of Chicago
Professor of Near Eastern History
President, Middle East Studies Association

The top-down corporate model can provide training, but not education; there's a big difference.

FRANK SOTTILE

Texas A&M University
Professor of Mathematics

As a product of public higher education, and coming from a non-privileged background, I oppose efforts to dilute standards and classroom time in higher education, especially at institutions that serve people who are not members of the privileged classes.

SYLVIA WHITE

University of Akron
Associate Professor of Media

We are also under pressure to graduate more students, quicker and for less money. I understand the imperative, but when it "dumbs down" the education students receive, it does no one any good.

TERI YAMADA

California State University, Long Beach
Professor of Asian Studies

This is the wrong direction for public higher education.

ELIZABETH BANKS

University of Kansas
Associate Professor of Classics, Emerita
Same thing happening here. Can't say that Kansas is out of the mainstream of stupidity!

DAVID CURWEN

Western Michigan University
Associate Professor of Dance

Any plan that needs to resort to threats and intimidation and that bypasses agreed-upon shared gov-

ernance is doomed from the start. Start over in good faith and take the time to find a viable pathway.

COLLEEN DELANEY-RIVERA

California State University, Channel Islands
Associate Professor of Anthropology

Experiential learning (lab courses) and foreign language classes are both vital in transforming students into lifelong learners, as they provide students with different ways of learning, gathering data and viewing the world around us.

WILFRED MAJOR

Louisiana State University
Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages and Literatures

I have already seen the results of this type of programming here. Not only does it hollow out education, but it robs students of thousands of tuition dollars and leaves them unable to get jobs that are commensurate with their degree. Most students end up graduating and stuck in the same jobs that they could have had if they had never attended college in the first place. The administrators don't care, because they are getting the money out of these exploited students.... Employers should resist this change, too, because they will not have graduates who are capable of doing the work they need done. For a couple of years of financial austerity, the economic consequences are severe and difficult to correct for decades. It's bad business. Period.

JANE BUCK

Delaware State University
Professor Emerita of Psychology
Past President, American Association of University Professors

As a past president of the American Association of University Professors, I am appalled at the administration's arrogation of faculty prerogatives.

OLGA BROUMAS

Brandeis University
Professor & Director of Creative Writing
Science, foreign languages and English to be cut? Could we be more backward...than we already are?

ADAM KELLY

Harvard University
Postdoctoral Fellow in English

This is a disturbing moment for higher education in many countries, and anything that can be done to retain the gains of the postwar era should be done.

AARON MCGOWAN

Rochester Institute of Technology
Lecturer, College of Science

As the value of a college degree continues to decline, the cost continues to soar. We are approaching a tipping point.

D. ROSELYN CERUTIS

Creighton University
Associate Professor of Oral Biology and Pharmacology

Teaching many science courses without labs is a problem for two reasons: first, it will greatly disadvantage students' learning, and second, it will make it harder to have those CUNY courses accepted by other universities outside that sys-

tem. At a time when STEM courses should be strengthened, this represents substantial weakening....

PAULINE VANMEURS

Austin Community College
Professor of Health Sciences

We are facing a similar threat here in Texas. A bill is proposed that will reduce the contact hour allotment for the associate degree from 72 hours down to 60 hours. This is a cost-cutting measure designed to be invisible to tax payers who are starting to buck the legislature's constant direct funding cuts to higher ed.... I agree that we should all be accountable for all aspects of our mission, including how to increase graduation rates. This is not the way. We all feel the crunch of constant cuts...but the colleges, including their administrations, should be the ones fighting the hardest for quality. As we say in Texas, "CUNY admin - grow a set."

MYRA FERREE

University of Wisconsin, Madison
Professor of Sociology
Director, Center for German & European Studies

Faculty participation in governance is never more critical than when curriculum is to be decided. There can be no excuse for bypassing a faculty senate.

MARGARET VAZQUEZ-GEFFROY

New Mexico Highlands University
Professor of Anthropology, Emerita
From East Harlem, my sister, my two brothers and I navigated the subways to public schools (elementary, junior high, high school and CUNY colleges). Without that preparation in the '50s and '60s, not one of us would have become: 1) a surgical nurse; 2) professor emerita of education; 3) president of a community college; and 4) professor emerita of cultural anthropology in New Mexico - where I still live. My husband is also an anthropologist, and a graduate of a CUNY school. My first-generation Puerto Rican father was a restaurant worker (as was my husband's father) all his life. All are grateful for the opportunities that were open to us - and we laud the system at every opportunity, at every academic venue we visit.

Please work diligently to derail this injustice to the children of present working-class community members. The great system of higher education at CUNY must not be compromised.

MARGARET FLEMMING

Austin Community College
Department Chair & Professor of Biology

This has been coming down the pipeline in Texas for a while. If it has not started in your state, it will. Be proactive and fight this trend.

TERENCE ROETHLEIN

Columbia University
Program Coordinator, American Assembly
The CUNY system is endowed with the honorable responsibility of providing affordable education for New York's working-class citizens. This should not mean these

In its first four weeks, 5,000 people signed the national petition in support of a moratorium on implementing CUNY's Pathways initiative (see page 3). And to date, fully one-third of the signers have left a comment - a truly surprising rate for an online petition.

Clearly this is an issue that has touched a chord far beyond the City University of New York: thousands of those comments were left by faculty at other colleges and universities. A selection of those comments appears below. (Institutions and organizations are listed for identification purposes only.) You can sign the petition - and read other signers' comments - at psc-cuny.org/pathwayspetition.

students get less educational value in a stalled economy. If anything, now is the time to increase the delivery of a solid education....

JOHN MENNINGER

University of Iowa
Professor of Biology
Science without laboratories is like cuisine without kitchens. Do be sensible.

MIKAILA ARTHUR

Rhode Island College
Assistant Professor of Sociology
Pathways does not meet best practices for general education. Faculty are the experts on educational prac-

undermine the value of a CUNY education.

JOHN GIANVITO

Emerson College
Associate Professor of Visual and Media Arts
Curricular decisions ought to be the province of the faculty. If the majority of the faculty at CUNY have concluded that the Pathways program erodes the quality of the education they've been hired to provide, then this needs to be honored.

EVIE SHOCKLEY

Rutgers University
Associate Professor of English
Such strong and wide opposition by

of shared governance, but right now it kind of is.

GORDON BURGHARDT

University of Tennessee
Professor of Psychology
There are moves in this direction at the University of Tennessee also. Our new proposed undergraduate curriculum drops a science course requirement. The mantra is increased graduation rates here as well....

ELLEN SCHRECKER

Yeshiva University
Professor of History
As the recipient of an honorary degree from CUNY, I am particularly disheartened by the Pathways initiative and its attempt to lower academic standards at one of our nation's leading public institutions of higher learning.

ELAINE FREEDGOOD

New York University
Professor of English
Hunter College, BA, 1989. Mellon Fellowship, Columbia, leading to PhD, 1996. Full professor of English at NYU today. Would not have happened with Pathways.

TANER EDIS

Truman State University
Professor of Physics
Science without labs? What are they thinking?

DOUGLAS COLEMAN

University of Toledo
Professor of English
Graduate Advisor, ESL
We do not advantage students when we "improve time-to-degree" by shortchanging education. Programs like Pathways are a disservice not just to students, but to those whose taxes support CUNY.

DARLENE EVANS

Cornell University
Senior Lecturer, John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines
This move by the CUNY administration does not bode well for academic rigor or higher education in general. Most of all, what a disservice to students!

DAVID SIDER

New York University
Professor of Classics
Because CCNY was tough, I benefited. Maintain teaching standards.

JOHN CURRY

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Associate Professor of History
If administrators can't convince their own staff of the wisdom of this program, then they need to go back to the drawing board and start over.



tices, and faculty should be making the decisions about curriculum.

LILLIAN TAIZ

California State University, Los Angeles
Professor of History
President, California Faculty Association

This is a critical issue for all of us, students, faculty and staff. This is a national issue and threatens to degrade the quality of education that all of us have invested our lives in providing. Those of us in California support your fight - we are all in this together!

JAMES SHEARER

New Mexico State University
Professor of Music

I am so tired of people who have never been in my classroom, who don't know my subject, and have no clue how to do what I do, trying to tell me (and, by extension, my colleagues) how to teach. Give us the support we need and trust us to do our jobs.

JUDITH PIERPONT

Cornell University
Senior Lecturer, John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines

Former CUNY faculty 1977-1985, Lehman College, recently retired from Cornell. I am disturbed by the cynical moves of the CUNY administration. Such deep cuts in curriculum and contact hours will

faculty - who are equally concerned with student retention and graduation - suggests that Pathways is not the best solution. The administration should be stopping in its tracks to rethink, rather than trying to railroad this plan through.

LAURA GOLDBLATT

University of Virginia
Doctoral Student in English
Solidarity! We stand with you at UVA.

MAL AHERN

Yale University
Doctoral Student in Film Studies
I am a CUNY alumna (MA, 2011, Graduate Center) worried that the value of my degree will depreciate.

HELENE HILL

New Jersey Medical School
Professor of Radiology
The suggested reforms will decrease the academic standing of a great university.

SETH KAHN

West Chester University of Pennsylvania
Associate Professor of English
The diluted quality of the education aside, the way CUNY management has gone about implementing Pathways violates every tenet of shared governance I can think of. I hate to make CUNY the battleground for the soul



Defend Social Security

As Clarion goes to press, news reports abound that President Obama is discussing an agreement with Republicans that would reduce future Social Security cost-of-living adjustments and make beneficiaries poorer over time.

This is not what we voted for in November. Please call your Congressmembers now at 888-659-9401 and tell them to oppose benefit cuts to Social

Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Encourage them to end the Bush tax cuts for the richest 2%. And don't forget to sign the petition to the NYS Delegation at www.nysaficio.org/ProtectOurFuture.

Congress needs to hear this message today. Senators and Representatives are back in Washington, DC, ready to make high-stakes decisions on these issues.

Time to stiff the fiscal cliff

By NANCY SCOLA & PETER HOGNESS

As Washington is gripped by the confrontation over the so-called "fiscal cliff," the central question is who will pay: the wealthiest Americans, through higher tax rates? Or working-class people, especially the elderly and disabled, through cuts to basic social programs?

"It's time that we stand up together," said New York City Central Labor Council President Vincent Alvarez at a December 6 labor rally in Times Square, "to fight to protect Social Security, fight to protect Medicare, fight for grandparents, and to make sure the rich pay their fair share."

REVERSING REAGAN

Former PSC Secretary Cecelia McCall, a member of the PSC's Legislative Committee and its Retiree Chapter, also spoke at the December demonstration. Unions across the country are mobilizing for a fair solution to the fiscal cliff showdown, and McCall described this as part of a longer-term fight to reverse the so-called Reagan Revolution of the 1980s. Before Reagan was president, McCall reminded the crowd, he was a national spokesperson for General Electric. "He paid back his handlers for putting him in the White House by cutting their personal taxes and taxes on corporations," said McCall. "Bush did the same thing. We're here to say, 'No more to that!'"

The Times Square rally was just one part of New York unions' efforts to affect the outcome in Congress. Representative Michael Grimm, a Republican member of Congress from Staten Island, was targeted in a December 1 event that organizers dubbed "The People's Yacht Trip" and involved leafletting and discussing the issue with passengers on the Staten Island Ferry. It was followed by a march and a speakout at Staten Island Borough Hall.

False crisis risks safety net



Former PSC secretary Cecilia McCall speaks at a December 6 rally at Times Square that drew unions from across the city to oppose cuts to future Social Security benefits.

Grimm is among the 238 out of 242 House Republicans who signed anti-tax activist Grover Norquist's pledge to oppose any and all tax increases. Staten Island residents who spoke at the December 1 protest emphasized that if Bush's tax cuts for the rich are made permanent, it will be difficult or impossible for Staten Island to get the federal aid it so badly needs.

UPPER HAND

On November 30, John Hyland of the PSC's Social Safety Net Working Group was one of several labor and community activists who met with Senator Chuck Schumer for close to an hour, in a meeting organized by the New York Coalition for a People's Budget. The group's message to Sen. Schumer was that "no bargain is better than a bad bar-

gain," Hyland told *Clarion*. "Deep cuts in social programs would hurt the economy, increase poverty, and damage these programs for the future," Hyland told *Clarion*. "That's a bad idea from any angle."

With the Bush tax cuts scheduled to expire on December 31 if Congress does nothing, Republicans are in a weak bargaining position, said Hyland, the PSC's former treasurer. In that context, he said, a GOP offer to accept marginally higher taxes for the rich does not represent a major concession, and certainly could not justify slashing Social Security, Medicaid or Medicare.

In the meeting, Schumer spoke positively about proposals from some Senate Democrats to lower the costs of social programs without reducing benefits – for example, by

allowing Medicare to use its market power to negotiate lower prices on prescription drugs. This approach fits with the analysis of the PSC's Safety Net Working Group, as laid out in its booklet, *Defending the Social Safety Net* (psc-cuny.org/safetynetbooklet). After all the exaggerations have been swept away, Hyland and other PSC activists say, budget shortfalls facing programs like Social Security can be addressed without benefit cuts – for example, through adjustments like eliminating the current cap on payroll taxes that protects income above \$113,700.

Unionists organizing around the budget showdown warn that with unemployment still high, this is exactly the wrong time to push for deficit reductions. They cite Nobel-Prize-winning economists Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman, who argue that the weak economy needs more public spending, not less. A policy of cutbacks and austerity, they say, will only cause the economy to contract, and could even trigger a "double-dip" recession.

HOW WE GOT HERE

How did we end up on the edge of this fiscal cliff? It's the result of politics, not economics, PSC activists say. With the growth of its Tea Party caucus, in 2011 the House refused to pass a routine bill to raise the federal debt ceiling. No new spending was involved: the bill was simply needed to pay for spending already authorized by Congress. But GOP lawmakers used the vote as leverage to try to win spending cuts they had been unable to achieve the first time around.

In the tense negotiations that followed, President Obama agreed to a plan that will trigger automatic across-the-board spending cuts at the end of this year unless Congress agrees on a plan to steeply reduce the federal deficit.

"It's a manufactured crisis," said PSC member Adam Tripp at the December Times Square rally. Tripp, who teaches economics at Bronx Community College, noted that healthy countries often carry significant debt. The looming December 31 deadline, he said, was driven by Tea Party ideology, not economic necessity.

'GRAND BARGAIN'

Talk of a "grand bargain" or a "balanced" combination of benefit cuts and spending hikes leaves most labor activists uneasy, concerned that Democrats could end up trading major benefit cuts for minor tax increases on the wealthy. So, activists are simultaneously pressuring Republicans on taxes while encouraging Democrats to "spine up."

Steve Leberstein, co-chair of the PSC's Social Safety Net Working Group, says that despite the scary sound of "going over the cliff," the impact of the automatic cuts would roll out over time – more of a gradual "fiscal slope" than a cliff. The new Congress, in which Tea Party forces are somewhat weaker, would have time to take corrective action, Leberstein says. What's more, recent polls show that the public is ready to blame Republican obstinance, not Obama or other Democrats, if no deal is reached by December 31 – so "going over the cliff" could increase the pressure on Republicans to make concessions.

For all these reasons, PSC activists insist, there is no good reason to start cutting more holes in our already frayed safety net, and they are urging members to contact their representatives without delay (see "15-Minute Activist" above). "We need to make our feelings known," said Joel Berger, a retired professor of education, at the Times Square rally, "that the social safety net must be protected and enhanced."

Austerity policies also damage the economy.