

Clarion

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



APRIL 2016

The fight is still on!

STRIKE AUTHORIZATION VOTE TO START

After six years with no increase in salary, PSC members are deciding whether to authorize the union's Executive Council to call a strike, should the leadership deem it necessary. At the same time, the PSC bargaining team continues to negotiate with CUNY management as the union also presses its case to lawmakers in Albany for resources for settlement of the contract. The budget passed by the legislature earlier this month includes no money for back pay, so the PSC fights on. Learn how to register your vote, beginning on May 2.

PAGE 4

ARRESTED

41 detained in budget protest

'Die-in' at Cuomo's Midtown office makes news.

PAGE 6



APPOINTED

Thompson and Ferrer tapped as trustees

A new era begins at CUNY as Benno Schmidt departs, and the former NYC comptroller is named chair. Also joining the board is the former Bronx borough president.

PAGE 3

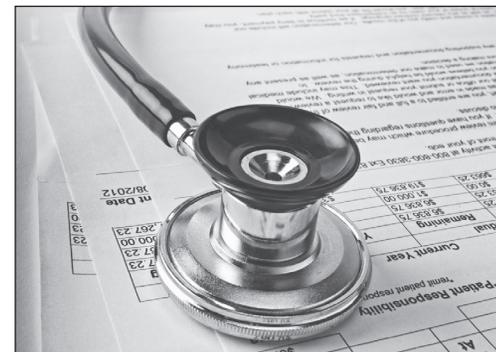


PRESERVED

MLC approves health-plan changes

The changes maintain no-premium status for GHI and HIP subscribers, but carry increased co-pays for certain services. Primary-care physicians are available with no co-pay.

PAGE 9



DISGUSTED

Union rings alarm on rat invasion at York

They're rifling through desk drawers, overturning plants and even scurrying over the shoes of those who cross their paths. But PSC activists are on the case.

PAGE 10

LABOR IN BRIEF

CFA reaches tentative agreement

The union representing faculty at California State University's (CSU) 23 campuses secured gains for its 26,000 members and averted a five-day strike, which would have been the largest strike at a four-year university in American history, according to the *Los Angeles Times*. The tentative deal delivers salary increases of 10.5 percent, before compounding, by July 2017, according to the California Faculty Association (CFA) website. The agreement must be ratified by CFA members and approved by CSU's Board of Trustees, which will vote on the proposal by the end of May.

PEF catches up with other state employees

New York State and the Public Employee Federation (PEF) reached a deal on salary increases and other outstanding concerns as *Clarion* went to press. The union representing 53,000 professional, scientific and technical state workers agreed to a 2 percent wage increase retroactive to April 1, 2015, which brings wage increases for PEF employees into line with those paid to state employees represented by other unions, including UUP and CSEA. This new contract expires in 2016, like most of the other state union agreements. PEF members will vote on the contract in May.

Chicago teachers strike

In a day-long walkout on April 1, members of the Chicago Teachers Union took to the streets and rallied for adequate state funding for schools. Thousands of teachers, community members and students turned out at sites throughout the city and brought attention to issues affecting the city's teachers and students, including concerns over pensions and staffing levels. District officials told the *Chicago Tribune* that they would not seek to discipline employees who took part in the strike.

Supreme Court reprieve for labor

The labor movement was granted a reprieve on March 29, when *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* was brought to a conclusion with a 4-4 tie between the conservative and liberal justices on the Supreme Court, leaving the lower court's ruling to stand. That means public-sector unions can continue to collect agency fees from nonmembers. Before the sudden death of Justice Antonin Scalia, the court was expected to side with the anti-union plaintiffs and the right-wing groups that supported them.

—Shomial Ahmad



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR | WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006. EMAIL: ASTAN@PSCMAIL.ORG.

Across generations, CUNY is a cause

● Activism in support of CUNY's historic mission is alive and well. A new generation of faculty, staff, students and community- and faith-based groups is bringing a special energy, passion and intelligence to the defense of the university in the face of massive disinvestment and political attacks.

But what's also notable is that the surge of recent organizing in the CUNY and contract struggles crosses generational lines. Retirees, in substantial numbers, have demonstrated, been arrested, lob-

bied in Albany and at City Hall, volunteered for phone-banking and, over the past year, contributed over \$17,000 to PSC/COPE, the union's political action fund.

There are multiple reasons for our commitment to CUNY's historic mission and the current contract fight:

● **Sweat equity.** The 2,700-plus members of the PSC Retirees Chapter have cumulatively logged over 80,000 years at CUNY, developing curriculum, providing student services, building gover-

nance structures and witnessing thousands of students, from what is arguably the most diverse student body in the world, transform their lives and that of the city and state. CUNY's mission is part of our DNA.

● **Been there, done that.** Many members of the retiree's chapter participated in the overwhelming strike authorization votes of 1972 and 1973 when the PSC was negotiating its first contract. Management tried to break the new union, but backed off and settled the con-

tract when faced with the resolve of a militant membership.

● **Lived history.** From the 1960s to the present, from Open Admissions to the 1975-76 fiscal crisis, from threatened college closings and retrenchment in the '70s and '90s to the budget, tuition and contract battles of the new century, we have been part of the fight-back rather than passive observers of events.

Joining with the "children of the whole people," their parents and communities, faculty, staff and alumni, many PSC retirees see CUNY as a cause. *A luta continua.*

Bill Friedheim

Borough of Manhattan Community College (retired)
Chair, Retirees Chapter

Civic and labor leaders join student march



Darius Freeman for USS

The University Student Senate of CUNY led a student march across the Brooklyn Bridge on March 13 to protest a cut to CUNY funding proposed by Governor Andrew Cuomo in his executive budget, as well as a tuition hike proposed by CUNY management. The march was bookended by rallies at City Hall and Brooklyn Borough Hall that drew labor leaders, including PSC President Barbara Bowen, and elected officials. Here, Brooklyn Deputy Borough President Diana Reyna addresses the students.

Clarion APRIL 2016

Newspaper of the Professional Staff Congress/City University of New York, collective bargaining representative of the CUNY instructional staff. Vol. 45, No. 3. PSC/CUNY is affiliated with the American Association of University Professors, National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers (Local 2334), AFL-CIO, the New York City Central Labor Council and New York State United Teachers. Published by PSC/CUNY, 61 Broadway, 15th floor, New York, NY 10006. Telephone: (212) 354-1252. Website: www.psc-cuny.org. Email: astan@pscmail.org. All opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the PSC.

PSC OFFICERS: Barbara Bowen, President; Michael Fabricant, First Vice President; Nivedita Majumdar, Secretary; Sharon Persinger, Treasurer; Steve London, Paul Washington, Alan Feigenberg, David Hatchett, Alia Tyner-Mullings, University-Wide Officers; Alex Vitale, Vice President, Senior Colleges; Penny Lewis, Clarence Taylor, George Sanchez, Senior College Officers; Lorraine Cohen, Vice President Community Colleges; Lizette Colón, Michael Spear, Anthony Gronowicz, Community College Officers; Iris DeLutro, Vice President, Cross-Campus Units; Andrea Vásquez, Alan Pearlman, Jacqueline Elliot, Cross-Campus Officers; Susan DiRaimo, Vice President, Part-Time Personnel; Blanca Vázquez, Lenny Dick, Michael Batson, Part-Time Personnel Officers; Steve Leberstein, Glenn Kissack, Retiree Officers; Irwin H. Polishook, President Emeritus; Peter I. Hoberman, Vice President Emeritus, Cross-Campus Units.

STAFF: Deborah Bell, Executive Director; Naomi Zauderer, Associate Executive Director; Faye H. Alladin, Coordinator, Financial Services; Debra L. Bergen, Director, Contract Administration & University-Wide Grievance Officer; Deirdre Brill, Director, Organizing; Francis Clark, Coordinator, Communications; Barbara Gabriel, Coordinator, Office Services and Human Resources; Jared Herst, Coordinator, Pension & Health Benefits; Kate Pfordresher, Director, Research & Public Policy; Diana Rosato, Coordinator, Membership Department; Peter Zwiebach, Director of Legal Affairs.

Editor: Adele M. Stan / Associate Editor: Shomial Ahmad / Designer: Margarita Aguilar / Copy Editors: Teri Duerr, Matthew Schlecht
© 2016 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

Holding NC providers accountable

● Recently the North Carolina legislature passed an anti-LGBT bill that not only allows businesses to discriminate against gays, lesbians and transgender people if it "offends" their religious beliefs, but also bars local governments from passing anti-discrimination ordinances. Needless to say, the bill was immediately signed by the Republican governor Pat McCrory despite the Republican party's alleged belief in local government.

The organizations Human Rights Campaign and Equality NC sent the governor a letter signed by more than 90 major businesses opposing this legislation. The letter, available at <http://tinyurl.com/NC-LGBTbiz>, includes signatures from senior officers at Citibank, TD Bank and also Bank of America, which has its headquarters in Charlotte, North Carolina. In fact PayPal just announced that they were transferring a planned new facility to another state because of this new law.

I looked in vain among those companies listed for TIAA-CREF, which also has its main headquarters in Charlotte. Are they really so uncaring? They hold retirement funds for many CUNY workers and faculty. We need to let them know that their attitude is offensive.

Ray Hoobler
CCNY (retired)

Budget deal avoids disaster, remains austere

By ADELE M. STAN

In a dramatic display of brinkmanship, the New York State legislature passed a budget in the early hours of April, after the March 31 deadline had come and gone.

Two things that were not included in the bill were Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposed \$485 million cut to the state's allocation for CUNY senior colleges and the authority to raise tuition for the coming year that was requested by CUNY management. The PSC and the University Student Senate of CUNY, along with such allies as NYPIRG and NYSUT, had launched a fierce campaign to prevent those proposals from making it into the final budget legislation, and won. The PSC and student advocates called for new investment of public funds, rather than ever-higher tuition, but the final budget did not make the new investment.

MAJOR CUTS AVOIDED

"By restoring the \$485 million to the state budget for CUNY, Cuomo simply solves a manufactured crisis and restores CUNY to austerity," wrote PSC President Barbara Bowen in an email sent to members during the final days of budget negotiations.

Indeed, the budget news was far from good for the university. Also omitted from the bill was the \$240 million the governor had initially cited in his executive budget for back pay in anticipation of settle-

No funding for PSC contract



Marty Kerins Jr.

Students lobby legislators in Albany last February for CUNY and SUNY funding.

ments with the PSC and other CUNY unions. (CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken had urged lawmakers to allocate \$330 million.) According to observers in the Capitol, in the days leading up to the vote all indications were that the legislature was prepared to provide the funding, but when legislative leaders emerged from negotiations with the governor, monies for back pay were off the table in the budget deal.

However, state Budget Director Robert Mujica said at a March 31 news conference with the governor that the state would "address" the question of funding for the PSC contract once CUNY had settled with the union.

"The PSC will hold the governor

to that statement," Bowen told PSC members.

Negotiation of the contract, which expired five years ago, is still ongoing under the aegis of a mediator appointed by the state Public Employment Relations Board.

BARGAINING CONTINUES

In a written statement, Milliken said, "We are hopeful we can reach a fair settlement soon and that the state and city will provide funding to resolve these long outstanding contracts."

The overall allocation for CUNY senior colleges, already far from adequate, barely increased at all – less than 1 percent. And while legislators

protected students from a tuition hike for one year, they did not replace with state dollars the revenue CUNY would have collected via increased tuition. In addition, students eligible for the maximum grant from state's Tuition Assistance Program do not receive funding for the full tuition bill, but the state requires CUNY to grant waivers to make up the difference, costing the university \$49 million annually, according to the University Budget Office. Community colleges fared somewhat better as the legislature increased Base Aid by \$100 per full-time equivalent (FTE) student, adding approximately \$17 million for next year.

A SLIGHT INCREASE

Although the legislature has supported "maintenance of effort" funding for CUNY and SUNY as recently as last summer – when it passed a bill that would have funded such mandatory cost increases as utility fees and collective bargaining, only to see it vetoed by the governor in December – the budget passed earlier this month includes no such allocation.

Other measures folded into the budget deal, however, include paid family leave, a statewide provision for raising the minimum wage, as well as a middle-income tax cut.

PSC leaders plan to continue to press the legislature for additional funding for CUNY, and for the resources needed to settle the PSC contract. The state legislative session ends on June 16.

PSC in the news

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

In an unprecedented number of news stories since the beginning of the academic year, the union amplified its fight for a fair contract and state funding for CUNY, with more than 150 news stories placed in major media outlets since the beginning of the academic year, ranging from prominent articles in *The New York Times* to on-the-ground televised reports during the union's two civil disobedience actions. Union members were in the news, talking to WNYC's Leonard Lopate (a Brooklyn College and Hunter College alumnus) about ongoing austerity at CUNY, writing op-eds for the *New York Daily News* and *City & State* and addressing upstate reporters about the drastic cuts to CUNY funding proposed by the governor in his executive budget.

"The uncertainty over CUNY's future has served only to mobilize a coalition of lawmakers, professors, students, liberal activists and city leaders in a coordinated effort to turn public opinion against the governor," wrote *New York Times* reporter Vivian Yee in a March 24 article, "Cuomo Faces Loud Backlash Over Push to Cut State's CUNY Funding," which appeared on *Times*'s website just hours before the union's CUNY "die-in" civil disobedience outside of Governor Andrew Cuomo's office (see pages 6-7).

MAJOR MEDIA

The New York Times covered the fight for CUNY funding seven times in its pages, including an April 11 editorial, "Don't Dilute CUNY's Urban Mission," which cited *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education*, an upcoming book written by Stephen Brier, a PSC member who was arrested in the union's March 24 civil disobedience, and PSC First Vice President Michael Fabricant.

WNYC, New York City's National Public Radio affiliate, covered the CUNY contract four times on its airwaves, including an interview with Chancellor James B. Milliken by morning host Soterios Johnson on February 29, in which Milliken was made to respond to comments by PSC President Barbara Bowen about the lack of an adequate offer by CUNY for settlement of the union's contract. On *The Brian Lehrer Show*, Politico New York's Conor Skelding discussed the unresolved contract. Democracy Now, carried by public radio and television stations across the country, covered the PSC's November action at CUNY headquarters.

The union's beefed-up media presence continues with stories in the works by major outlets. Stay tuned, and watch the headlines! For a complete list of recent media coverage of the PSC, go to tinyurl.com/psc-news.

Trustee nominees: Thompson and Ferrer

By PETER HOGNESS

Former City Comptroller Bill Thompson and former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer have been nominated to the CUNY Board of Trustees by Governor Andrew Cuomo, the governor's office announced on April 8. Both must be confirmed by the State Senate, which is expected to act this spring.

Thompson was nominated as chair of the board of trustees to replace Benno Schmidt, who has held the post since 2006.

"Bill Thompson and Fernando Ferrer both have long records as advocates for high-quality public education for all New Yorkers," said PSC President Barbara Bowen. "Bill Thompson, as a former schools chancellor, brings a wealth of experience with education policy in the public sector, and Freddy Ferrer, as former Borough President of the Bronx, has a history of advocacy for working-class and poor New Yorkers. I look forward to working with them in their new roles. Their history of advocacy is exactly what CUNY needs today, as we press for the funding required for a fair contract settlement."

A graduate of Midwood High School, which is located next to

Cuomo selects well-known pols

Brooklyn College, Bill Thompson earned his BA from Tufts University in 1974; he is a former Tufts trustee. As deputy borough president of Brooklyn from 1983 to 1992, Thompson was the youngest person to have held that office. From 1996 to 2001 he chaired the New York City Board of Education, to which he was appointed in 1994. Thompson was twice elected as New York City comptroller, serving from 2002 to 2009. He won the Democratic nomination for mayor in 2009, and was again a mayoral candidate in 2013.

Thompson has also worked in private finance and the business world, serving as a director of Key-Span/Brooklyn Union Gas Company and of a small investment bank, the Liati Group. He is currently a partner at Siebert Brandford Shank, an investment banking firm that offers underwriting and financial advisory services to state and local governments.

With Thompson chairing the CUNY trustees, the boards of both CUNY and SUNY would be headed by former comptrollers: Carl McCall, who chairs the SUNY board of trustees, was New York State's



Bloomberg

Former City Comptroller Bill Thompson nominated for board chair

comptroller from 1993 to 2002.

Fernando Ferrer is a CUNY alumnus, having earned his master's degree in public administration from Baruch College in 2004. Decades earlier, after graduating from Cardinal Spellman High School, he received his BA in 1972 from NYU's University Heights College of Arts and Sciences in the Bronx, on a cam-

pus that later became the home of CUNY's Bronx Community College. Like Thompson, he has prior experience as a higher education trustee, having served on the board of Metropolitan College of New York.

Ferrer served on the New York City Council from 1982 until 1987, when he was elected Bronx borough president, an office he held for the next 14 years. He ran for mayor in 1997, 2001 and again in 2005, when he won the Democratic nomination; he was the first Latino New Yorker to do so. From 2002 to 2004, Ferrer was president of Drum Major Institute for Public Policy, and today he is a partner and co-chair of Mercury Public Affairs, LLC. He is also vice chair of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and a board member of the Regional Plan Association, and a director of Sterling Bancorp and Sterling National Bank.

Schmidt, the former Yale president and for-profit education entrepreneur who will be replaced by Thompson, had been serving as a holdover on a term of office that expired in 2013. One gubernatorial appointee, Hugo Morales, continues to serve on an expired term, as do two mayoral appointees, Judah Gribetz and Carol Robles-Roman.

NYC comes together for CUNY Rising

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

In an unprecedented effort by labor and community groups to pressure New York State to support CUNY, more than 1,200 people from the coalition CUNY Rising lined an entire block of Third Avenue, between 41st and 42nd Streets, in view of Governor Andrew Cuomo's Midtown office. Nurses, clerical and custodial workers, CUNY students, PSC members and New York City high school students with dreams of going to college were crammed into protest pens constructed by police for the March 10 rally, which was organized by an alliance of two dozen groups, including the Professional Staff Congress, New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPRIG), AFSCME's District Council 37, CUNY's University Student Senate (USS), faith-based groups and other organizations. Their chants echoed amid the skyscrapers: "City University under attack. What do we do? Rise up! Fight back."

SPIRITED PROTEST

Following the spirited protest rally, participants marched to the Murray Hill neighborhood, where they gathered at the Community Church of New York on 35th Street.

As the protesters assembled on the busy Manhattan street, lawmakers in Albany were debating the level of state funding CUNY colleges would receive in the coming fiscal year, and whether to approve a hike in tuition requested by CUNY management. In his executive budget proposal released last January, Cuomo introduced a staggering \$485 million cut to the state's allocation for CUNY's senior colleges, a blow that Kenneth LaValle, chair of the State Senate Higher Education Committee, said would constitute a "life-changer for [the] institution," according to Politico New York. Also at stake was funding to settle the university's outstanding labor contracts with the PSC, DC 37 and other unions, which have been without contracts for more than five years. (The budget deal hammered out with leaders in the state legislature on March 31 did not include dedicated monies for settling the contracts, but also did not institute the nearly half-billion-dollar cut proposed by the governor. The final budget did not grant CUNY the authority to raise tuition as university leaders had requested. See Page 3.)

COMING TOGETHER

"This is a coming together of all of New York because CUNY belongs to the people," PSC President Barbara Bowen told the CUNY Rising crowd. "Our fight is just beginning tonight," she said.

Motorists in the evening rush signaled their support, honking in solidarity. One driver of a yellow medallion cab raised his fist through his

Broad-based coalition fights for higher ed



Axel Owen, a Hunter college junior, protested a proposed tuition hike at the CUNY Rising march.

open window, while his passenger held up two fingers in a "V."

Deborah Meise, an administrative assistant at the College of Staten Island, arrived wearing a green DC 37 T-shirt. She used two hours of her annual leave time to attend the rally, and was quick to note that she and her union sisters and brothers have not seen a raise in seven years.

"Everything goes up, except our salaries," Meise said. "Our parking [fee] at the college is going up, the prices of everything at the college are going up, the prices of everything on the outside

Rush hour drivers signaled their support.

are going up." Meise squarely put the blame for the lack of a contract on the governor. "We've got to make some noise," she said. "Maybe if we disturb [Cuomo], he'll wake up."

Philip Yanos, a professor in psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, stood near the passing traffic at the edge of the rally. "The budget deadline is April 1, and time is running out," Yanos said as he held up a blue-and-white CUNY Rising sign that decried tuition hikes and the lack of contract. "I don't think the people of New York are taking this seriously. This is an effort to destroy public higher education in New York City," he added.

Students, labor and community leaders and CUNY alumni came to the podium to tell the crowd what the university means to them, their community and the people of New York.

"It's an institution that serves us all, an institution that has provided

access to higher learning with affordability," said Alexandros Hatzakis, director of planning at the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies and an alumnus of Baruch College. "Too much rests on the shoulders of our students. Do not shift the burden to them. Invest in quality, invest in affordability, [invest] in all of us," he said.

"I have busted my butt every single day to study," Venus McGee told the crowd, speaking of the challenges of raising her children while attending LaGuardia Community College. She doesn't want the op-

portunity that's available to her to be out of reach for her children and future generations, she said.

With their handmade signs of neon poster board, CUNY students led the march to the church as night began to fall. "It's only when people stand up and make noise [that] change happens," Axel Owen, a Hunter College junior, told *Clarion* as he held up a sign that spelled out in twinkling lights: STOP THE HIKE. He added, "And the time is now."

"When we stand here and fight against tuition hikes, against any

cuts, we have to stand with the very folks who are in the classroom with our young people every day: the professors, the staff of CUNY," Zakiyah Ansari, advocacy director of the Alliance for Quality Education, told the hundreds of protesters who gathered in the church.

The work of the coalition is just beginning, said PSC First Vice President Mike Fabricant, who outlined a "platform for change" designed to keep CUNY accessible, ensure academic support for the transition to higher education and address critical infrastructure needs for CUNY colleges. "There is no institution in this city that does more for racial and economic justice and contributing to the reinvention of lives than the City University of New York," Fabricant said.

THE WHOLE PEOPLE

But the night ultimately belonged to the students, as one by one they took the stage and connected their personal stories with the original mission of the City University of New York: to educate children of "the whole people" of New York City. They talked about state disinvestment and higher tuition and spoke of working full-time while going to school full-time. One told of her path from high-school dropout to CUNY graduate student. Quasi Modeste, a junior at Bard High School Early College Manhattan, talked about how her mother worked, raised a family and attended classes at Kingsborough Community College in order to become a physical therapist.

"[My mother's] experience at CUNY has shown me that CUNY is more than the sum of its budget. It represents the dream of many New Yorkers," Modeste told the audience. "It must be strong for generations to come."

Strike authorization vote

Balloting information here

The PSC Strike Authorization Vote will be conducted from Monday, May 2, at 12 noon through Wednesday, May 11, at midnight (for Internet and telephone voting). The vote will be administered by the American Arbitration Association (AAA) in accordance with the terms of the PSC Constitution. Members can vote by Internet, by telephone or by mail.

Those who are members in good standing for four months are eligible to vote, so those who were PSC members as of January 2, 2016, and continue to be employed by CUNY are eligible to vote (per Article III, Section 5 of the PSC Constitution). Retirees not currently employed by CUNY are not eligible to vote;

neither are Research Foundation employees.

Voting instructions (for all modes of voting) and a mail ballot, as well as an individualized PIN number to use when voting by Internet or by phone, will be mailed by AAA to all eligible voters for delivery by May 2. That same day, AAA will also send an email blast to all members containing their PIN.

HELP AVAILABLE

If the PSC does not have your updated mailing address or email address, please contact the PSC

Membership Department as soon as possible at 212-354-1252.

Eligible members who for unforeseen reasons have not received a ballot in the mail by May 2 should call the PSC in order to receive a duplicate PIN for Internet or telephone voting.

The mail ballots will be counted on the morning of May 12, and the results will be announced later that day.

Limited space for observers will be available. Those interested may contact Barbara Gabriel, bgabriel@psemail.org.

Vote preparation strengthens PSC chapters

As PSC members prepared to take a strike authorization vote beginning the week of May 2, Clarion reached out to campus activists to find out how their chapters had been affected by the organizing done for the vote. (See page 4, “Strike authorization vote,” for how to cast your vote.)

Luke Elliott-Negri

Graduate Assistant, Sociology Doctoral Program
PSC Chapter Chair, The Graduate Center
Let’s not sugarcoat it – news from Albany this month was bleak. While we must continue to build formal political leverage in Albany – through relationships with NYSUT, community organizations and other labor unions and, most importantly, by organizing CUNY alumni and students – we have the most control over *internal* organizing. In fact, some 90 percent of those we’ve talked to in the Graduate Center chapter (which includes the School of Professional Studies, the School of Public Health and the School of Journalism) have pledged publicly to support strike authorization! The next step, of course, is to talk to every member.

This requires nothing short of empowering dozens of – if not a couple hundred – members, providing good data and organizing training, if necessary, to talk to every single worker in every single department. This is how we build power during objectively difficult times, holding Governor Cuomo to his commitment to address our situation once we have agreed to a contract with CUNY management.

Meg Kallman Feeley

Adjunct Lecturer,
English Department
PSC Part-Time Liaison,
Kingsborough Community College

At the last chapter meeting at Kingsborough, I found myself saying that the strike authorization vote was the best thing that ever happened to our chapter. (I guess we have Governor Cuomo to thank.) In a little over a month, I saw about 20 of us come together – full-timers, part-timers, HEOs – to train to speak with our colleagues, one on one, about the strike authorization vote. I will admit, I did not know them all. I remember the low voices – the concerns that we wouldn’t have time to organize everyone, or that our outreach would not be well-received, or even that we might experience retribution for supporting the vote.

We adapted different strategies, from tabling in the breezeway to attending departmental meetings, to one-on-one conversations and buttonholing people near the mailboxes. What I witnessed, and spoke to at the chapter meeting, was the momentum that gathered in a few short weeks. Shortly after we began, our brothers and sisters from District Council 37 started their own tabling right next to ours. Our college president stopped by, and said: “Don’t be too

Building member solidarity

quick to strike. We need you.” It was nice to hear. Soon, I was being stopped several times a day to answer the question “What’s going on with the union?” – even by those who did not immediately sign a pledge to vote yes. But the most profound change was in the speed and comfort with which we contacted each other: via text, or email, or in the parking lot in the middle of the day, over the weekend. Sometimes just a “V” sign thrown as we passed in the halls.

Posters declaring I’M VOTING YES started to line the hallway. And you could feel something change in a few short weeks: we were together, even when we differed. I heard from several colleagues who changed their positions, and we hugged. Some-

partments or in our same job titles, conversations are also happening across these lines, helping members understand one another’s concerns and interests. As a full-time professor, for example, it’s important that I understand the concerns of HEOs, contingent faculty, and others who feel vulnerable. At the same time, as union activists, Brooklyn College member-organizers are making the case that the best response to this vulnerability is in solidarity.

Jennifer Harrington

Assistant Director of Academic Advisement
Office of Academic Programs
School of Public Affairs, Baruch College
Talking confidentially to my Ba-



Sarah Hughes, union semester program coordinator at the Murphy Institute, shows her support for strike authorization at a Graduate Center rally held on March 22.

thing seems to have changed because we had this conversation on our campus, and I hope it gives us the strength to work together as a chapter in the future.

James Davis

Professor, English Department
PSC Chapter Chair, Brooklyn College
The strike authorization campaign has energized the Brooklyn College chapter to a degree I haven’t seen in years. Forty faculty and staff members have been holding one-on-one conversations with colleagues, and listening has been an important part of our outreach. We want to persuade everyone to support strike authorization, of course, but we also see this campaign as an opportunity to promote the chapter’s visibility as an agent of positive change on our campus.

It has been a crash course in the CUNY and state budgets, the legislative process, and New York labor law. Although many of us are speaking to colleagues in our own de-

partments, both faculty and staff, about the strike authorization vote – what it means, what it entails, and any possible repercussions it may engender – has brought more awareness and momentum to chapter-building at Baruch. In fact, very early on in the process of gathering signatures, a colleague asked me, “Why doesn’t Baruch have a faculty chapter chair?” I didn’t have an answer for her right away, but after learning more about the PSC’s efforts, I was able to tell her that the PSC hopes to have a new faculty chapter chair as soon as possible, after a voting process.

I strongly believe that having these one-on-one conversations regarding the strike authorization vote opened people’s eyes to the benefits of union membership and the idea that a union is only as strong as its members (and their participation). I expect Baruch PSC membership and chapter-building to grow significantly as a result of these conversations.

Michele Doney

Director of the Math & Science Resource Center
John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Organizing around the upcoming strike authorization vote at John Jay is actively underway. Our John Jay chapter has 43 trained activists, including 18 HEOs. We’re raising awareness, answering questions and inviting members to take the pledge. Of the people who have been visited by activists, 70 percent have signed, and most of the rest are still deciding. Very, very few have ruled it out, and even among those few, a common sentiment is that although they do not favor a job action, they still recognize the critical importance of not crossing a picket line.

Robert Cermele

Professor, Mathematics Department
PSC Chapter Chair, New York City College of Technology

For decades a major issue at City Tech was the teaching load of professorial faculty. When we became a senior college in 1980, we taught 27 contact hours, as do all community colleges. Fifteen years ago we embarked on an effort for an equitable 21-hour teaching load at Tech.

It was a bottom-up type of organizing since there was a nearly unanimous desire for workload equity among the faculty. After a series of incremental reductions, two years ago we achieved our goal. The final push was a petition drive whose objective was to get full-time faculty to sign. We achieved about 80 percent of that goal with around 350 signers.

So when the effort to sign members up on the strike authorization vote effort began, we were ready. Of course, this time it was a top-down effort and required trained activists to explain the rather complex issues, making it more difficult to secure signatures. However, the issue of the strike authorization vote has activated the membership to a degree not seen since our workload organizing effort. Additionally, another effect of the strike authorization vote campaign has been an increased awareness of the PSC’s legislative efforts on the budget, and members tell me that they send their emails to the legislators and the governor as soon as they receive a message from the union asking them to do so.

Lizette Colón

Faculty Counselor
PSC Chapter Chair, Hostos Community College

“¡Ya estoy harta! Really, I am simply fed up!” This was the sentiment voiced by a Hostos HEO when she was asked to join the informational picket line that took place on April 7 at our campus. And this is the same sentiment, filled with frustration and outrage, that is being echoed throughout the campus, especially since the announcement of the New York State budget earlier this month. The frustration and anger has reached a boiling point through-

out the Hostos PSC membership and other constituencies of our college.

We have used that momentum to mobilize our chapter to keep fighting for fair funding for CUNY and for our contract, and to move toward the strike authorization vote. The executive committee of our chapter invited students, along with DC 37 and Teamsters members, to join us at the informational picket line: It is the same struggle, same fight! We planned this event with the leadership of a group of students that Joan Beckerman, an adjunct lecturer, and I have been meeting with for the past two months. They made signs, recruited other students to assist us in setting up, took pictures, sent tweets (I Will #DefendCUNY Because) and collected signatures supporting the faculty and staff’s right to a fair contract. (The Hostos PSC Twitter handle is: @Hostos_PSC.)

In the picket line we were energized with the creative chants from Berkis Cruz-Eusebio (HEO), while at the podium, members encouraged the crowd to keep up the fight. Afterward, PSC member activists visited departments, talking one on one with members, addressing questions regarding the strike authorization vote and getting more members to sign a pledge to vote yes.

On my way home I kept savoring one of the messages shared at the rally from an article written by Glenn Kissack: “Be realistic; demand the impossible.” Chancellor Milliken and Governor Cuomo: We are ready at Hostos!

Sigmund Shen

Associate Professor, English Department
PSC Chapter Chair, LaGuardia Community College

At LaGuardia, the strike authorization vote discussion has been a unifying experience, and an educational one. Many members who previously had not been as active in the union have spoken strongly in favor of strike authorization this year. Substantive union discussions at department meetings have become, if not quite yet “the new normal,” definitely widespread and commonplace.

Our connections with DC 37 members and CUNY students, both on the authorization vote and on more local issues, are stronger now than in any year I can remember since I started working here in 2004. Even members who have not yet been persuaded to vote yes are highly engaged in the conversation, raising important questions about tactics and law, the living history of the US labor movement and the meanings of “solidarity,” both in a union and in collective action. I have personally learned a lot from these conversations, and many people have stepped up to help build and lead the chapter. As in any family, people have not always agreed. But this conversation has absolutely brought us closer together as a chapter, and much of that additional strength will outlast the challenges we presently face.

Compiled by Shomial Ahmad

‘Don’t let CUNY die!’

41 arrested in CUNY funding

By ADELE M. STAN and SHOMIAL AHMAD

At a protest during the final days of deliberations over the details of the New York State budget, 41 PSC members and allies were arrested by police after holding a “die-in” outside the Manhattan offices of Governor Andrew Cuomo. Two New York City Council members, Higher Education Committee Chair Inez Barron and Civil Service and Labor Committee Chair I. Daneek Miller, were among those charged and detained on March 24, as was PSC President Barbara Bowen. Arrested protesters also included an 80-year-old adjunct and a full-time professor in her last trimester of pregnancy.

On an unseasonably warm afternoon, those risking arrest gathered on the corner of 41st Street and Third Avenue in Manhattan, buoyed by the chants of a crowd of around 1,000 rallying in a police pen directly across the street from the building where those exercising civil disobedience would hold their action. The slogan of the day rang loud across the avenue: “C-U-N-Y, don’t let CUNY die!”

‘EDUCATIONAL JUSTICE’

The rally and disruptive action took place at a time when it was yet unknown whether the final budget would include the \$485 million cut in state funding to CUNY proposed by the governor in his executive budget. (It did not, though the final budget agreed to in the state legislature does not include funding for the PSC contract or the money needed to replace tuition revenue. See page

3.) The PSC and students were also protesting a proposed tuition hike and calling for increased public investment instead.

Along with PSC activists, community allies and students were well represented among those who turned out for the rally. They carried signs that read: INVEST IN CUNY – INVEST IN NEW YORK, FREEZE TUITION, CUNY IS FOR THE PEOPLE, CUNY IS ABOUT RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE and GOV. CUOMO SAYS CUTBACKS, WE SAY FIGHT BACK!

A CHORUS OF VOICES

Before they took their places in the die-in, Bowen and Barron each addressed the crowd on the rally side of the street, using the mic-check format pioneered by the Occupy movement so that their words would carry across the avenue.

“We are students, faculty and staff united. We are a community of labor, and we are all here for one reason: We want educational justice!” Bowen said. “It’s not enough simply not to cut CUNY. New York State must add funding to CUNY.”

Barron addressed the fact that CUNY workers, including PSC members, have been without a contract for at least six years. “Every worker is entitled to the protections of a contract,” she said. “Six years is too long to go without protections, to go without increases in salary.”

Shirley Jackson, vice chair for graduate affairs for the CUNY University Student Senate (USS), pumped up the crowd. “Now is the



Around 1,000 people rallied across the street from where union members and their allies held their civil disobedience.

time to let Cuomo know: Hell, no! The cuts have got to go,” she said.

Jonathan Westin, executive director of New York Communities for Change – like the USS, part of the CUNY Rising coalition – said he spoke on behalf of his organization’s 20,000 members and “our families, parents and students that stand with you.”

In a protest pen on the west side of the street, Chika Onyejiukwa, president of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) at Hunter College and vice chair for legislative affairs in USS, said, “We’re here to urge the governor to invest in CUNY, to invest in our faculty and our students.” Onyejiukwa is a junior, majoring in community health.

A NATIONAL FIGHT

Looking up at the office building sheathed in tinted glass that houses the governor’s city headquarters, Cesar Guzman, a USG employee at Hunter, remarked, “It’s not a very transparent place for someone who holds a lot of power in New York City.”

Across the street, where those prepared to risk arrest gathered, Susan Kang, associate professor of political science at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, told *Clarion* that she saw the battle over CUNY’s funding as part of a national fight.

“I don’t think it’s just CUNY or our budget that’s at stake, I think it’s public higher education. I think both Democrats and Republicans are very pleased to see how little

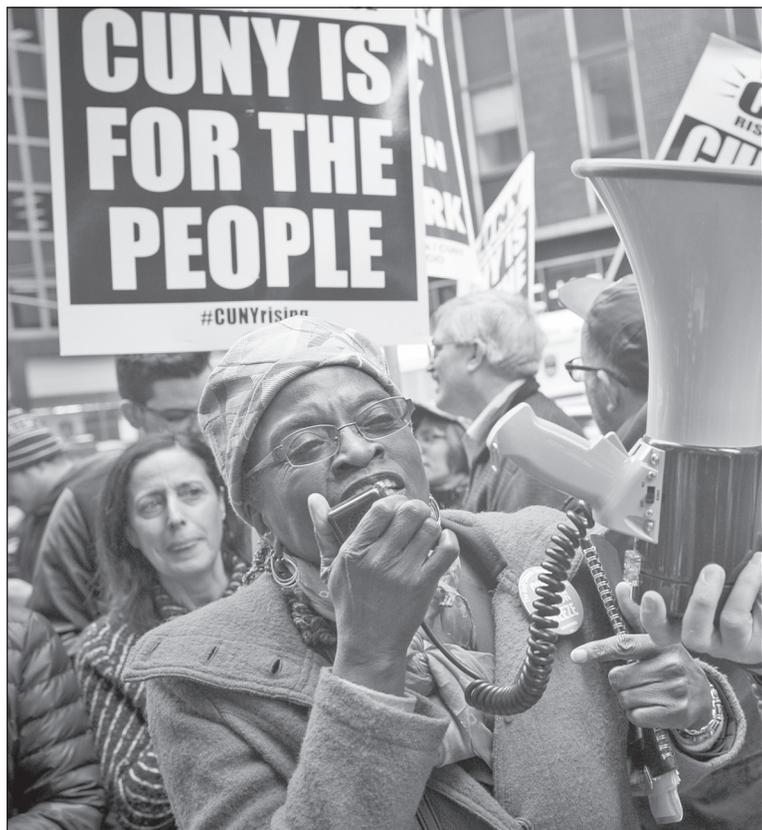
politics are going, this is no longer the trend. And he’s kind of a trend follower.”

Kang was calm in her anticipation of being arrested, despite the fact that she was seven months pregnant. She had wanted to take part in the disruptive action by PSC members at CUNY headquarters in November, Kang said, but felt it was too risky then. “I don’t have to teach tomorrow, and my husband can take care of my child today, so I’m in a good position to do it,” she said.

CLASS STRUGGLE

John Hyland, a retired sociology professor who taught at LaGuardia Community College, said he had three reasons for taking part in the die-in, despite the fact that neither the fight to settle the PSC’s contract with CUNY, which expired six years ago, nor the state budget allocation for CUNY affects him as directly as when he was actively teaching. First on his list is the labor struggle. “I’m still a member of the PSC, and I still have solidarity with the folks who are still working,” he said. But the struggle to maintain a viable public higher education system, and the class struggle that it implies, are equally important to him, he said.

Describing his own class origins as “sort of on the edge of working class and petit bourgeois,” Hyland explained that before finding public-sector employment working in the court system, his father did physical labor, loading and unloading trucks.



City Council member Inez Barron, who later was arrested at the ‘die-in,’ addressed the hundreds of union members and students at the March 24 rally.



John Jay faculty member Susan Kang, who is in her third trimester of pregnancy, was among

protest outside gov's office



PSC activist Marcia Newfield

Hyland, a former treasurer of the PSC, sees the need to battle constantly for CUNY as a threat to the institution. Of the politicians behind the state's disinvestment in the university, Hyland said, "They've been doing this for many, many years."

That may be so, but for Veronica Ordaz, a higher education officer (HEO) at the Murphy Institute for Labor Studies, this year's budget fight seemed particularly pressing. "Every rally has been important but this one is urgent," she said, standing amid the chanting students and faculty in the rally pen on the west side of Third Avenue. The threat-

ened budget cut was cast as something that would affect only faculty and staff, she said, but she found it impossible to see how it could not affect students.

She was protesting, she said, "because we need a contract, because we know that the [strike authorization] vote is coming, because they haven't been listening to us for six years."

'CUNY IS OUR PRIDE'

Scott Sheidlower, president of the PSC chapter at York College, was motivated by what he characterized as the unacceptable offer made by CUNY management for settling the contract (an increase below the level of inflation), but not simply for himself, he said.

"We are role models for our students, and if we take 6 percent we are saying to our students, 'OK, when you're offered garbage as a salary when you graduate, take garbage,'" he said.

Nancy McKenzie, an adjunct at Hunter College and at the School of Public Health, concurred in what became a wide-ranging conversation between two PSC members who had never met before. "If their professors are undermined then they are undermined," she said of CUNY students.

"The greater cause is the fact that this is our City University and most of the students are under-resourced," McKenzie added. "We have to keep CUNY. It is our pride. It's New York State's pride, as far as I'm concerned."

Sheidlower had hoped to be among those participating in the die-in, and had taken the training required for all who took part in the disruptive action, but because he has epilepsy, he was told it was too risky for him. So he signed up to be part of the jail support team.

FIGHTING FOR RESOURCES

Joining the group risking arrest was Elizabeth Goetz, a graduate student and adjunct lecturer at Hunter, who expressed concern both for her students and teaching colleagues at the college. "[I]n my department, we have to fight for printer paper, we have to fight for staplers. There's not enough chairs in the office for some of us to sit down on. There's 20 teachers who share an office on the 14th floor of my department. There's not enough desks assigned to the teachers for all of them to use at any given time."

At some colleges, CUNY's high workload for faculty and uncompetitive salaries are making it difficult to retain and recruit faculty. Lorraine Cohen, chair of the sociology department at LaGuardia Community College, said she was risking arrest in part for that reason. "I have had faculty whom we wanted [to



Chanting 'C-U-N-Y, don't let CUNY die,' dozens of activists lay down in civil disobedience outside the Manhattan offices of Governor Andrew Cuomo.

hire], who would not come because of the salary and the workload. And I have one fantastic history teacher who's leaving because of the salary and the workload," she said.

Jean Grassman, associate professor of health and nutrition sciences at Brooklyn College, at CUNY since 1999, has observed the state's steady disinvestment in the university. But the wrangling over this year's budget, she said, made her feel that the institution was being "threatened in a way that it hasn't been in the past." She was prompted to risk arrest, she said, because "the governor is being really intransigent, and everybody needs to take it to the next level."

'WE'RE WITH YOU!'

Around 5:15 pm, the first group of members to take part in the civil disobedience locked arms chanting, marched to the sidewalk in front of the governor's offices and lay down on the sidewalk. The action was repeated by members marching in groups of five until the sidewalk was filled with prone protesters, many of whom held placards on their chests

that read: DON'T LET CUNY DIE and MORE FUNDING, NOT LESS, FOR CUNY.

From the opposite side of the street, some participating in the rally shouted, "We're with you!" Using a bullhorn, PSC Treasurer Sharon Persinger narrated the action: "Councilwoman Barron has been arrested."

POLICE CLOSE IN

Officers from the New York City Police Department moved in, ordering those performing the die-in to stand, handcuffing them with plastic restraints and escorting them to buses from the Department of Corrections. Protesters, who had trained together in advance of the arrest, cooperated with the police.

The detainees were taken to NYPD headquarters at One Police Plaza, and kept in sex-segregated holding cells for several hours, after which they were released with desk appearance tickets. As night fell, the air turned cold, but that didn't deter the support committee, which included PSC officers, from standing vigil with sandwiches

and snacks for the protesters, each of whom was greeted with applause and shouts of appreciation as they walked up the hill where the support committee waited. Treasurer Persinger joined Elizabeth "Zabby" Hovey in singing "Rolling Home," a labor anthem; others simply whooped and hollered. Sheidlower handed out beverages. The last of the group were released just before midnight.

Travis Swett, a student at the Graduate Center who is working on a doctorate in sociology, explained his reason for participating in the die-in and arrest. "Purposely doing illegal acts is showing that you're willing to disrupt the social order of the city" for a just cause, he said. The public, he added, was willing to tolerate it because of its own investment in CUNY. Even the cop who drove the bus that took him to jail was attending the College of Staten Island, he said.

"It's a losing political game for Cuomo to be attacking CUNY," Swett said. "I think he really underestimates what CUNY means to this city."



The 41 protesters participating in the CUNY die-in.

On this page Clarion reprints information from the PSC's audited financial statement for the years ending August 31, 2015, and 2014. The introductory text and the text of Note 1 are abridged. The full audited statement, which includes figures for the year ending August 31, 2015, and 2014 is available at psc-cuny.org/PSC-budget-FY2015.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND AUDITOR'S REPORT
AUGUST 31, 2015, and 2014

Independent Auditor's Report

To the Executive Board of Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York (PSC/CUNY), which comprise the statement of financial position as of August 31, 2015, and the related statements of activities and of cash flows for the year then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

Management's Responsibility for the Financial Statements: Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America; this includes the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

Auditor's Responsibility: Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
AUGUST 31, 2015, AND 2014

NOTE 1. ORGANIZATION AND TAX STATUS

The Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York (PSC/CUNY) was created by a merger of the Legislative Conference of The City University of New York and the United Federation of College Teachers. It was created to be the collective bargaining representative of the instructional staff of the City University of New York (CUNY). The Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York is a Local (Local 2334) of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Through the AFT, PSC/CUNY is affiliated with The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

NOTE 2. SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Method of Accounting – The accompanying financial statements are prepared using the accrual basis of accounting. Net assets are classified as unrestricted, temporarily restricted or permanently restricted. Net assets are generally reported as unrestricted unless assets are received from donors with explicit stipulations that limit the use of the asset. PSC/CUNY does not have any temporarily or permanently restricted net assets.

Cash and Cash Equivalents – PSC/CUNY considers all unrestricted cash and highly liquid investments, including certificates of deposit with initial maturities of three months or less, to be cash equivalents.

Investments – Investments are carried at fair value which generally represents quoted market prices, or the net asset value of the mutual funds, as of the last business day of the fiscal year as provided by the custodian or investment manager. Certificates of deposit are carried at cost which approximates fair value. Certificates of deposit that have initial maturity dates of more than three months are considered to be investments.

Property and Equipment – Property and equipment are recorded at cost. Major additions are capitalized while replacements, maintenance and repairs which do not improve or extend the lives of the respective assets are expensed currently. Depreciation is computed over the assets' estimated useful lives, three to 30 years, by the straight line method. Depreciation expense was \$106,357 for the year ended August 31, 2015, and \$100,275 for 2014.

Accrued Compensated Balances – Future employee absences that have been earned but not yet taken are accrued within the contract limits. The accrued compensated balances were \$481,472 for the year ended August 31, 2015, and \$471,847 for 2014.

Deferred Rent – Operating leases are recognized on a straight-line basis over the term of the lease. Deferred rent has been recorded for the difference between the fixed payment and the rent expense. Deferred rent was \$893,170 for the year ended August 31, 2015, and \$871,690 for 2014.

Estimates – The preparation of financial statements in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect reported amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. Actual results could differ from those estimates.

Reclassifications – Certain reclassifications have been made to prior year amounts to conform to the current year presentation.

NOTE 3. CONCENTRATION OF CASH

PSC/CUNY places its cash with financial institutions deemed to be creditworthy. The balance is insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) up to \$250,000. Cash balances may at times exceed the insurance deposit limits. As of August 31, 2015, PSC/CUNY's cash in excess of FDIC coverage totaled \$582,423.

NOTE 4. INVESTMENTS

The following summary presents the fair value for each of the PSC/CUNY's investment categories.

	2015	2014
Investments at fair value as determined by quoted market price or net asset value of the fund:		
Mutual funds	\$ 5,335,902	\$ 5,304,761

The following are the balances as of or for the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014 as provided by the Plan's actuary:

	2015	2014
Projected benefit obligation	\$(4,681,141)	\$(4,172,301)
Fair value of plan assets	2,732,837	2,720,102
Funded status	\$(1,948,304)	\$(1,452,199)
Accumulated benefit obligation	\$(807,000)	\$(595,398)
Amounts recognized in the statement of financial position:		
Noncurrent assets	-	-
Current liabilities	-	-
Noncurrent liabilities	(1,948,304)	(1,452,199)
Amounts in net assets not recognized as components of net periodic benefit cost:		
Accumulated net gain or (loss)	(1,141,304)	(856,801)
Weighted-average assumptions:		
Discount rate	3.75%	5.00%
Expected return on plan assets	7.00%	7.00%
Rate of compensation increase	4.00%	4.00%
Employer contributions	\$ 215,004	\$ 215,004
Benefits paid	\$ 13,621	\$ -
Net periodic pension cost	\$ 426,081	\$ 518,140
The change in unfunded pension benefit obligations consists of the following:		
Net periodic pension cost	\$ 426,081	\$ 518,140
Less: Employer remittances	(215,004)	(215,004)
	211,077	303,136
Increase (decrease) in unrecognized accumulated net gain or loss	285,028	(151,486)
	\$ 496,105	\$ 151,650

In 2015 and 2014, PSC/CUNY has recorded a loss of \$285,028 and a gain of \$151,486, respectively, to its net assets for the additional change in accrued pension payable beyond the current-year pension expense.

The Plan's expected long-term rate of return on assets assumption is 7.00%. This assumption represents the rate of return on Plan assets reflecting the average rate of earnings expected on the funds invested or to be invested to provide for the benefits included in the benefit obligation. The assumption has been determined by reflecting expectations regarding future rates of return for the investment portfolio, with consideration given to the distribution of investments by asset class and historical rates of return for each individual asset class.

At August 31, 2015, and 2014, the Plan's net assets available for benefits were allocated as follows:

	2015	2014
Mutual funds	21.55%	23.40%
Common stock	49.15%	52.64%
United States Government and Government Agency obligations	24.95%	19.69%
Cash and cash equivalents	4.35%	4.27%
The major classes of Plan investments at August 31, 2015, and 2014 are:		
	2015	2014
	Fair Value	Fair Value
Mutual funds	\$ 588,950	\$ 636,606
Common stock	1,343,214	1,431,964
United States Government and Government Agency obligations	681,877	535,543
Cash and cash equivalents	118,796	115,989
	\$ 2,732,837	\$ 2,720,102

For the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014, there were no transfers in or out of levels 1, 2, and 3.

Fair Value Measurements at August 31, 2015

	Total	Level 1	Level 2
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 118,796	\$ 118,796	-
Common stock:			
Basic materials	185,187	185,187	-
Consumer goods	155,715	155,715	-
Financial	161,506	161,506	-
Healthcare	170,883	170,883	-

EXHIBIT A*
PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY
BALANCE SHEET – AUGUST 31, 2015

	2015
ASSETS	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 832,714
Investments – at fair value	
Certificates of deposit	992,000
Mutual funds	5,335,902
Total investments	6,327,902
Receivables	
Dues	971,000
Due from related entities	624,000
Due from other	774
Total receivables	1,595,774
Property and equipment	
Equipment	657,240
Leasehold improvements	529,641
Furniture and fixtures	330,967
	1,517,848
Less: accumulated depreciation	(1,111,641)
Net property and equipment	406,207
Total assets	\$ 9,162,597
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
Current liabilities	
Accrued expenses	238,786
Accrued compensated balances	481,472
Due to related entities	2,223,142
Total current liabilities	2,943,400
Long-term liabilities	
Deferred rent	893,170
Unfunded projected pension benefit obligation	1,948,304
Total long-term liabilities	2,841,474
Total liabilities	5,784,874
Unrestricted net assets	3,377,723
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 9,162,597

Industrial goods	6,730	76,730	-
Services	310,548	310,548	-
Technology	282,645	282,645	-
U.S. Government and Government Agency obligations:			
United States Treasury	195,242	195,242	-
Government agencies	486,635	-	486,635
Mutual funds:			
Fixed income	333,317	333,317	-
Equity	255,633	255,633	-
	\$ 2,732,837	\$ 2,246,202	\$ 486,635

	Total	Level 1	Level 2
Cash & cash equivalents	\$ 115,989	\$ 115,989	-
Common stock:			
Basic materials	385,515	385,515	-
Consumer goods	146,191	146,191	-
Financial	88,672	88,672	-
Healthcare	121,815	121,815	-
Industrial goods	93,382	93,382	-
Services	329,112	329,112	-
Technology	267,277	267,277	-
U.S. Government and Government Agency obligations:			
United States Treasury	216,042	216,042	-
Government agencies	319,501	-	319,501
Mutual funds:			
Fixed income	\$ 332,417	\$ 332,417	-
Equity	304,189	304,189	-
	\$ 2,720,102	\$ 2,400,601	\$ 319,501

PSC/CUNY's investment policies are designed to ensure that adequate plan assets are available to provide future payments of pension benefits to eligible participants. Taking into account the expected long-term rate of return on plan assets, PSC/CUNY formulates the investment portfolio composed of the optimal combination of cash and cash equivalents, equities, fixed income and mutual funds.

Future Cash Flows

The projected contribution for next fiscal year is \$215,004.

The following benefit payments, which reflect expected future service, are expected to be paid as follows:

2016	\$ 673,990
2017	-
2018	-
2019	-
2020	1,030,800
2021-2025	2,813,549

NOTE 7. MULTIEMPLOYER DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION PLAN

PSC/CUNY participates in the Office and Professional Employees International Union, Local 153 Pension Fund, a multiemployer defined benefit pension plan, under the terms of a collective bargaining agreement that covers its union-represented employees who meet age and service requirements. The risks of participating in multiemployer defined benefit pension plans are different from single-employer plans in the following aspects:

a. Assets contributed to the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan by one employer may be used to provide benefits to employees of other participating employers.

b. If a participating employer stops contributing to the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan, the unfunded obligations of the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan may be borne by the remaining participating employers.

c. If the Plan chooses to stop participating in the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan, the Plan may be required to pay the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan an amount based on the underfunded status of the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan, referred to as a withdrawal liability.

PSC/CUNY's participation in the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan for the annual periods ended August 31, 2015, and 2014, is outlined in the

table below. The zone status is based on information that PSC/CUNY received from the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan and is certified by the multiemployer defined benefit pension plan's actuary. Among other factors, pension plans in the red zone are generally less than 65 percent funded, pension plans in the yellow zone are less than 80 percent funded, and pension plans in the green zone are at least 80 percent funded.

SEE TABLE 1 (PAGE 9)

* PSC/CUNY participates in the Local 153 Pension Fund through a collective bargaining agreement between PSC/CUNY and the Office & Professional Employees International Union, Local 153, AFL-CIO. The collective bargaining agreement has a three year term of October 1, 2012, through September 30, 2015.

SEE TABLE 2 (PAGE 9)

* The employer contribution rate of the Pension Plan was \$161 per week per employee effective June 1, 2013, \$177 effective June 1, 2014, and \$195 effective June 1, 2015.

SEE TABLE 3 (PAGE 9)

NOTE 8. MULTIEMPLOYER PLAN THAT PROVIDES POSTRETIREMENT BENEFITS OTHER THAN PENSIONS

PSC/CUNY contributed to one multiemployer defined benefit health and welfare plan during the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014 that provides postretirement benefits for its full-time support staff employees. PSC/CUNY's contributions to the welfare plan on behalf of its full-time employees, contribution rates and number of employees covered are as follows:

SEE TABLE 4 (PAGE 9)

The monthly contribution rate per active employee and retiree was \$1,919 and \$861, respectively, for the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014. Effective January 1, 2015, regular contributions for support staff members to PSC/CUNY 153 Health Fund ceased and PSC/CUNY began contributing to New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) to participate in their health plan under which the professional staff is covered. After January 1, 2015, PSC/CUNY contributed \$66 per month to PSC/CUNY 153 Health Fund per active employee and \$8 per month per retiree for life insurance and vision benefits, and disability for active employees.

NOTE 9. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

Identification of Related Organizations

PSC/CUNY has the following related entities:

- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- New York State United Teachers (NYSUT)
- Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York Welfare Fund
- The American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

The entities listed above share common trustees, officers or affiliation with PSC/CUNY.

PSC/CUNY is affiliated with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) through arrangements whereby PSC/CUNY pays dues to each entity in order for its members to participate in affiliated programs and, in turn, is reimbursed for various expenses, including reimbursements for meetings, organizing, legislative representation, training programs and arbitration.

Dues paid to NYSUT for the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014 were \$6,604,035 and \$6,185,300, respectively. As of August 31, 2015, and 2014, PSC/CUNY owed NYSUT for dues \$1,460,512 and \$811,000, respectively. Dues paid to AFT for the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014 were \$3,333,962 and \$3,127,314, respectively. As of August 31, 2015, and 2014, PSC/CUNY owed AFT for dues \$762,630 and \$423,000, respectively.

Reimbursements from NYSUT for the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014 were \$3,315,113 and \$3,107,363, respectively. As of August 31, 2015, and

Continued on page 9

EXHIBIT B*
PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 2015

	2015
Revenues	
Membership dues and agency fees	\$ 14,177,108
Organizing assistance	3,568,744
Investment income	
Net realized and unrealized gains (losses)	(83,499)
Interest and dividends	148,512
Less investment fees	(15,325)
Rental income	222,459
Total revenues	18,017,999
Expenses	
Affiliation fees	10,222,776
Salaries, employee benefits and payroll taxes	4,887,649
Representational and governance	241,899
Public relations	149,516
Building expenses	1,359,201
Administrative, office and general	434,858
Professional fees	478,633
Contract & budget campaigns	503,363
Stipends and reassigned time	367,075
Depreciation expense	106,357
Total expenses	18,751,327
Net (decrease) increase in net assets	(733,328)
Net assets, unrestricted	
Beginning of year	4,396,079
Adjustment to pension liability funded status	(285,028)
End of year	\$ 3,377,723

*See accompanying notes to financial statements.

EXHIBIT C*
PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY
STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
YEAR ENDED AUGUST 31, 2015

	2015
Cash flows from operating activities	
Change in net assets	\$(733,328)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets to net cash provided by operating activities	
Depreciation	106,357
Net realized and unrealized losses (gains)	83,499
Pension liability funded status	(285,028)
(Increase) decrease in assets:	
Dues receivable	(84,000)
Due from related entities	(364,607)
Due from other	(774)
Increase (decrease) in liabilities	
Accrued expenses	(17,816)
Accrued compensated absences	9,625
Due to related entities	989,142
Unfunded pension liability	496,105
Deferred rent	21,480
Net cash provided by operating activities	220,655
Cash flows from investing activities	
Purchase of property and equipment	(7,186)
Purchase of certificates of deposit	(198,000)
Liquidation of certificates of deposit	198,000
Sale of investments	553,204
Purchase of investments	(667,844)
Net cash used for investing activities	(121,826)
Net increase in cash	98,829
Cash and cash equivalents	
Beginning of year	733,885
End of year	\$ 832,714

Changes to City health plans

By LARRY MORGAN

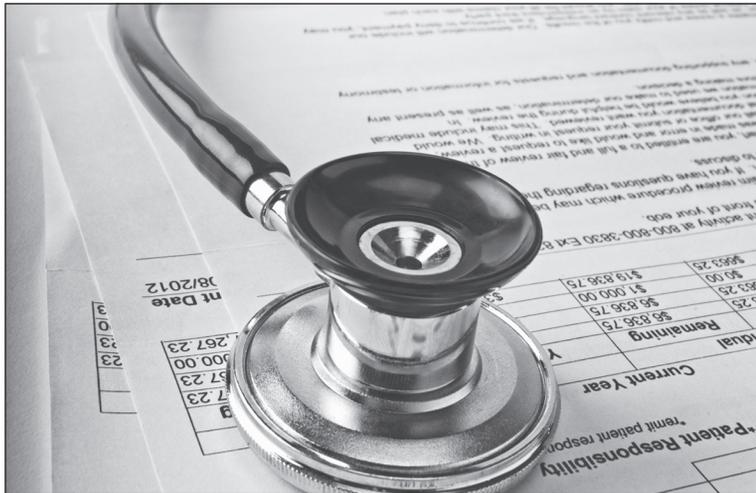
For the first time in about 15 years, there will be increases in select co-payments for covered active and non-Medicare-eligible retirees in the two largest health insurance plans for municipal employees, Group Health Incorporated (GHI) and Health Insurance Plan of New York (HIP). This action is being taken to preserve GHI and HIP as no-premium plans. The changes are the result of negotiations between the City of New York and the Municipal Labor Committee (MLC), the coalition of citywide unions that negotiates with New York City on matters that affect members of the city's more than 100 municipal employee unions.

During the 1970s, the MLC negotiated the unions' responses to the exigencies of the city's fiscal crisis. In recent years, the MLC has negotiated with the city primarily about health insurance, a benefit that predates unionization and was established under Mayor Fiorello La Guardia.

CONTROLLING COSTS

For the past 20 years, mayoral administrations have demanded various changes and reductions in health insurance benefits for city employees, claiming that rising health-care costs are too much for the city to afford and that the New York City employee package is much richer than other public- and private-sector benefit packages. The MLC response has typically been to reject city proposals or to identify strategies for reducing costs that have had little or no direct impact on most of the 365,000 active employees and 160,000 retirees and their families. Such approaches included re-positioning the tax status of health insurance providers and finding ways to control physician and hospital cost increases by expanding prior authorization requirements for

Safeguards no-premium status



certain procedures or facilities.

The vast majority of city employees (and PSC members) and retirees receive health insurance through either GHI or HIP – now both part of Emblem Health, a New York-based not-for-profit company. New York City pays more than \$6.5 billion for health insurance for its employees, retirees and their families. GHI and HIP are both cost-effective health plans, in part, because of the large number of people covered – well over a half-million. Nevertheless, costs keep going up, and the city cannot act to control those costs without negotiating with unions.

FINDING SAVINGS

When he was elected in 2014, Mayor Bill de Blasio set out to settle the city's unresolved labor contracts. But part of the problem he faced when he took office was that there was no labor reserve in the city budget with which to pay for increases or back pay. So, as a key element of his labor strategy, he set a goal for slowing the rate of health-care cost increases for city employees. How-

ever, he took a different approach from the Bloomberg administration, which had tried for six years to coerce municipal unions into agreeing to allow the city to charge members an annual premium for their health insurance. (This dispute is one of the reasons no city labor contracts were settled – including the PSC's – after 2008.)

To address this constraint, the city's settlement with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) covered nine years, spreading out the payment of retroactive increases and back pay. The settlement was accompanied by an agreement with MLC unions to jointly identify and implement more than \$3 billion in health-care savings over four years, as well as to provide the city access to \$1 billion in cash in the joint Health Insurance Stabilization Fund to help finance wage increases in city union contracts. (The fund – jointly managed by the city and the MLC – was established in 1982 to set aside funds based on HIP HMO rates exceeding GHI rates and several other factors. In recent

years, savings have been accruing at a healthy rate.)

Over the past two years, the city has settled almost all of its labor contracts (but not with the PSC because of the city/state duality of funding CUNY), and the first two years of health care savings have been instituted through joint discussions between New York City's Office of Labor Relations and the MLC. These savings had no impact on members' health-care outlays, but were achieved because 1) increases in city health insurance costs were not as high as projected in the city's five-year financial plan, 2) after an audit of employees' dependents, ineligible dependents were dropped from coverage and 3) a more extensive hospital stay management program was put in place.

For the third year, starting July 1, 2016, a portion of the additional savings will be achieved by shifting

Letter from City outlines changes

some costs to employees and retirees covered by GHI through higher co-pays for certain medical services. Union representatives insisted that co-payments be structured so that members who use the system optimally will not see big increases in health care costs. In those situations a co-pay increase becomes an "incentive" to seek a less expensive choice. For example, getting routine medical care in hospital emergency rooms (ER) is very expensive (about \$1,500 for the insurance company, not including tests), and a consultant reported that city employees use ERs much more frequently than workers covered by other plans. Employees covered by GHI who go to the ER (and are not admitted to the hospital) will now be charged a \$150 co-pay (up from \$50). Those who use the ER will

pay the extra \$100 as a cost-shift. Those who elect a different level of care save the insurer a much larger expense. Either one counts toward the savings that are being sought.

Here's what else is happening: The GHI co-pay for a visit to a specialist will increase from \$20 to \$30, and there will be co-pay increases to \$50 (up \$35) for use of "urgent care" centers and for MRI/CTs, and a \$5 co-pay increase to \$20 for physical therapy and diagnostic labs.

EXPANDED COVERAGE

The GHI co-pay for a regular office visit with a primary care provider will *not* increase, and GHI is expanding the number and hours of its outpatient facilities throughout the city and in Nassau and Suffolk counties. GHI Advantage Care Physician (ACP) centers will offer access to primary care physicians with *no co-pay*. There are 36 ACP centers citywide, plus Montefiore in the Bronx. (Locations can be found on the ACP website: <http://physicians.acpny.com>.) GHI is also contracting with a telemedicine provider to provide access to an Internet-based physician.

HIP subscribers will also see changes in their plan. For those with a primary care doctor who is in the new "HIP Preferred" network, there will be no co-pay, as usual. For a visit to a HIP non-preferred physician, there will be a \$10 co-pay.

In addition, as mandated by the Affordable Care Act, there is a significant expansion of preventive procedures available at no charge from in-network providers (to be discussed in the second part of this *Clarion* series).

Members (active and non-Medicare-eligible retirees) currently enrolled in GHI and HIP can expect to receive (or to have recently received) an explanatory mailing from the City of New York and Emblem Health describing the changes. Review it carefully. The letter includes a phone number at the health insurance company to call if you have questions or want more information.

PSC Budget

Continued from page 8

2014, the NYSUT owed PSC/CUNY \$585,000 and \$228,393, respectively. Reimbursements from AFT for the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014 were \$247,801 and \$235,062, respectively. As of August 31, 2015, and 2014, AFT owed PSC/CUNY \$32,000 and \$31,000, respectively.

Office Space Leases

PSC/CUNY leases office space from 61 Broadway Owner, LLC (the Realty Corp). On September 30, 2005, PSC/CUNY entered into a 16 year lease with the Realty Corp for Suites 1500 and 1615 of the 61 Broadway building. The lease was amended on August 4, 2009, and May 17, 2012, to include Suites 1630 and 1610, respectively. The leases, all which expire on August 31, 2022, are classified as operating leases and provide for minimum annual rentals, plus certain additional expense escalations and utility charges. Per the agreement, PSC/CUNY is also responsible for its portion of real estate taxes.

The minimum annual future rental payments under the three leases are summarized as follows:

Year ending August 31,	
2016	\$ 1,102,872
2017	1,171,395
2018	1,195,401
2019	1,219,899
2020	1,247,967
Thereafter	2,591,979
Total	\$ 8,529,513

Rent including utilities was \$1,206,201 for the year ended August 31, 2015, and \$1,205,591 for 2014.

PSC/CUNY subleases office space to the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York Welfare Fund, a related party. The Welfare Fund pays PSC/CUNY a sum equal to 23.90% of the lease of Suite 1500. The sublease expires on August 31, 2022.

The minimum annual future rental income under the sublease

with the related party is summarized as follows:

Year ending August 31,	
2016	\$ 185,379
2017	200,055
2018	204,056
2019	208,137
2020	212,300
Thereafter	437,423
Total	\$ 1,447,350

Total rental income for the years ended August 31, 2015, and 2014 was \$222,459 and \$208,887, respectively. As of August 31, 2015, the Welfare Fund owed PSC/CUNY \$7,000 for rent.

NOTE 10. FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

PSC/CUNY expended \$18,751,327 for the year ended August 31, 2015, and \$17,651,119 for 2014. PSC/CUNY has estimated that on a functional classification basis these expenses would be allocated as follows:

	2015	2014
Union activities	83%	82%
Management and administrative	17	18
Total	100%	100%

NOTE 11. LITIGATION

Certain claims, suits and complaints arising in the ordinary course of business have been filed or are pending against PSC/CUNY. In the opinion of PSC/CUNY's management and legal counsel, the ultimate outcome of these claims will not have a material adverse effect on the financial position of PSC/CUNY.

NOTE 12. SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

PSC/CUNY has evaluated subsequent events through March 15, 2016, the date the financial statements were available to be issued, and they have been evaluated in accordance with relevant accounting standards.

TABLE 1

Legal Name of Pension Plan	Pension Plan's Employer Identification Number	Pension Plan's Plan Number	Pension Protection Act Zone Status				Expiration Date of Collective Bargaining Agreement
			Zone Status	Extended Amortization Provisions Used?	Zone Status	Extended Amortization Provisions Used?	
Local 153 Pension Fund	13-2864289	001	Red as of 01/01/15	No	Red as of 01/01/14	No	*

TABLE 2

Legal Name of Pension Plan	Contributions paid by the Plan directly to the Pension Plan		Contributions to the Pension Plan greater than 5% of total Pension Plan contributions (Plan year ending)		Employer Contribution Rate of the Pension Plan		Number of Employees Covered by the Pension Plan for which the Plan contributes directly to the Pension Plan	
	8/31/2015	8/31/2014	No, Plan year ending 8/31/15.	No, Plan year ending 8/31/14.	8/31/2015	8/31/2014	8/31/2015	8/31/2014
Local 153 Pension Fund	\$ 108,533	\$ 102,213			*	*	13	12

TABLE 3

Legal Name of Pension Plan	Funding Improvement Plan or Rehabilitation Plan Implemented or Pending?	Surcharge paid to Pension Plan by the Benefit Funds?	Minimum contributions required in future by CBA, statutory requirements, or other contractual requirements?	
			No?	If yes, description
Local 153 Pension Fund	Rehabilitation Plan Implemented	Yes	No	N/A

TABLE 4

Legal Name of Plan providing postretirement benefits other than pension	Contributions to Plan		Employer contribution rates		Number of employees covered by Plan	
	8/31/2015	8/31/2014	8/31/2015	8/31/2014	8/31/2015	8/31/2014
Local 153 Health Fund	\$ 265,964	\$ 298,285	*	*	17	16

POETS OF CUNY SING OF LABOR

Epic reading at the Cooper Union

In the Great Hall of the Cooper Union on March 20, the PSC hosted “CUNY Writers Against Austerity: A Reading in Defense of CUNY,” an event organized by Kimiko Hahn of Queens College. Here we present the poems of six of the reading’s 50 presenters. Echoing the bookending poets of that day, we open *Clarion’s* presentation with the poem read by Hahn, and close with the piece read by former US poet laureate Billy Collins of Lehman College.

Everest

By KIMIKO HAHN
Distinguished Professor,
Department of English, Queens
College

November 11th, 1919. In Centralia,
Washington, the air
smells both cold and sweet with sap
and the sweat of a hundred Wobbly
lumberjacks—
broken and arrested
for conspiring for safety in the mills
unlike Jake, his arm sawed off, or
Billy
fallen in the swollen water
and found two days later
beyond recognition
but for his amazing goddamn
suspenders.
The air smells of coffee too,
the acid of it. You know what
that friggin’ coroner wrote
about me? After I shot out of
what was left of the IWW office,
after the Legionnaires
tied me to the back of a car,

dragged me over the mud roads we
have up here,
hanged me from a telephone pole a
couple hours—
yeah, yeah by my neck
and still I wasn’t dead—
the cops saved me for jail
so the mob could cut off my balls
hang me from the bridge this time
then dump me
into the Skookumchuck River’s
elegiac currents.
I was dead then, you bet.
The coroner, as I was saying,
declared my death
a suicide: that I had jumped off the
bridge
then shot myself full of holes.
That was the end of the Wobblies in
Centralia.
But we’ll be back in another form—
cause employers can never afford
to pay labor
without keeping some unsafe
somewhere or some workers
unemployed somewhere else—
keep us off balance and scared of
shivering babies.



QC Distinguished Professor Kimiko Hahn

Funny—it was Eleanor Roosevelt
who said the only way to get rid of
revolutionaries
was to get rid of poverty.
Smart kid.
But not half as smart as one who is
hungry.

First published in *VOLATILE*, Hanging
Loose Press, 1999

CUNY Writers
Reading Against
Austerity

for Linsey Abrams

By MICHELLE YASMINE VALLADARES
MFA Lecturer, Department of
English, City College of New York

The death of Naná Vasconcelos and
the silence
of his *berimbau* and drums is
connected
to the increase in class sizes and
cuts to adjuncts
to my Portuguese Podengo Pequeno
attacking a Pekinese is connected
to seeds turning into cherry
blossom trees
to karma’s cause and effect is
connected
to a governor who cuts funding for
students most in need
to bees dying and glaciers melting
is connected
to what matters, Black Lives and the
end of violence
to the still and clear minds of

meditators who imagine peace is
connected
to the poaching of elephants, to
rainforests, rivers and oceans
and the murder of Berta Cáceres in
Honduras is connected
to the air you breathe and the air I
breathe
to the wars our tax dollars support
is connected
to the *mantra* for the politician who
asked—*Todos Somos Mexicanos*
to the rights of women and girls is
connected
to the yoga that opens the heart
chakra, to the lead in Flint and
Newark schools
to the summer I saw wild horses
run on Pismo Beach is connected
to the *rainmaker* who breaks the
drought in the village
to the wine and bread we’ll share
this evening, *Salut!* is connected
to *inter*: prefix meaning *between*,
among. We are interconnected—
our happiness and suffering,
ancient wisdom, white tigers and
this earth.

Nocturne

By MARGUERITE MARÍA RIVAS
Associate Professor, English
Department, Borough of Manhattan
Community College

Daughters, when you lie awake
wishing for sleep,
do you hear the scuff of the wash
bucket,
slap of mop, drip of gray water
and know that when she scrubs the
kitchen floor
your mother sees your future, our
futures
beyond this worn linoleum?
She blesses herself with hands,
cracked and bleached,
kneels and murmurs a benediction
over your narrow beds,
then places her calloused palms
upon your backs
feels for an adagio of your
breathing
rising with the pulsing of her
hopeful heart.

Labor Ghazal

By ROGER SEDARAT
Associate Professor, Department
of English, Queens College

Dear authors of the world, unite for
labor!
Your work’s important when you
write for labor.

Lack of a contract and a living
wage:
Two of the wrongs they need to
right for labor.

The perks of power seized by
management
Historically have been denied for
labor.

While theories of a trickle down
might work
For one percenters, they’re not
quite right for labor.

Why not appropriate an ad
campaign?
Let’s ask Lebron to drink a Sprite
for labor.

So many workers in the top ten list
Of toughest U.S. jobs died for labor.

Please spare us your “ideals”
Republicans.
Your grandest rhetoric sounds trite
for labor.

Awakened by his nightmare, the
governor
Was haunted by what he denied for
labor.

Let’s build a wall near Mexico with
names
Of everyone who came and died
for labor.

Call me romantic, but I have to
believe
Neruda actually cried for labor.

Grow tall trees all around the
poultry plant.
America reserves such blights for
labor.

¿Caesar Chavez, *dónde estás?*
Patrons
Insist on stealing fruit turned ripe
from labor.

Just as so many birds made one
simurgh,
Our voices here have unified for
labor.

Author’s note: A *simurgh* is a mythical
bird comprising 30 individual birds flying
as one flock in the classical Persian poet
Attar’s *Conference of the Birds*.

Schoolsville

By BILLY COLLINS
Distinguished Professor, Lehman
College, US Poet Laureate, 2001-
2003

Glancing over my shoulder at the
past,
I realize the number of students I
have taught
is enough to populate a small town.

I can see it nestled in a paper
landscape,
chalk dust flurrying down in winter,
nights dark as a blackboard.

The population ages but never
graduates.
On hot afternoons they sweat the
final in the park
and when it’s cold they shiver
around the stoves
reading disorganized essays out
loud.

A bell rings on the hour and
everybody zigzags
in the streets with their books.

I forgot all their last names first and
their
first names last in alphabetical
order.

But the boy who always had his
hand up
is an alderman and owns the
haberdashery.

The girl who signed her papers in
lipstick
leans against the drugstore,
smoking,

brushing her hair like a machine.
Their grades are sewn into their
clothes
like references to Hawthorne.

The A’s stroll along with other A’s.
The D’s honk whenever they pass
another D.

All the creative writing students
recline
on the courthouse lawn and play
the lute.
Wherever they go, they form a big
circle.

Needless to say, I am the mayor.
I live in the white colonial at Maple
and Main.

I rarely leave the house. The car
deflates
in the driveway. Vines twirl around
the porchswing.

Once in a while a student knocks
on the door
with a term paper fifteen years late
or a question about Yeats or
double-spacing.

And sometimes one will appear in a
window pane
to watch me lecturing the wall paper,
quizzing the chandelier,
reprimanding the air.



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Make your voice heard

Watch your mailbox! If you're a member in good standing since January 2, you'll be receiving ballot information for making your voice heard in the PSC's strike authorization vote. Once voting begins, you'll be able to cast your ballot either by Internet, telephone or on paper. But it all begins with a mailing from the

PSC, which will give you detailed instructions for voting, and a PSC phone number for assistance. As the PSC conducts the vote, the union will continue to fight for a fair contract in the negotiating room, and to lobby state and city lawmakers to adequately fund our contract and CUNY. (For more information, see page 4.)

Professional Staff Congress/CUNY
61 Broadway, 15th Floor
New York, New York 10006

Return Service Requested

NonProfit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
New York, N.Y.
Permit No. 8049

The strategy behind the vote in May

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

Opposing austerity; demanding respect

Here is the union's plan for reaching an acceptable contract settlement:

● During the next six weeks, the PSC expects to be in intensive contract negotiations with CUNY management, with the assistance of the mediator assigned as a result of the impasse declaration. Our aim is to reach an agreement that can be presented to Governor Cuomo and the Legislature before the end of the legislative session in mid-June, with the expectation that it will be fully funded. On March 31, Governor Cuomo's budget director said publicly that funding for the PSC would be addressed when a contract agreement is reached.

● At the same time, the union will continue to build the leverage we need – and become prepared for further action if necessary – by holding the strike authorization vote. The vote will be held from May 2 through May 11, with results announced on May 12.

● Because we are serious about reaching an agreement through negotiations within the current legislative session, the union leadership will not initiate any strike or job action before the end of the academic year. If we get the strong "yes" vote on strike authorization we expect, and if we subsequently decide that a strike or job action is necessary, the action will take place no earlier than the fall.

I am writing now to ask you to give the union bargaining team the strongest possible support as we enter into what we hope will be the final stage of negotiations. You can do that by joining the thousands of

union members who have publicly pledged to vote "yes" to authorize a decision to initiate a strike. We will publish the names of those who have pledged a "yes" vote before the voting begins on May 2. Make sure your name is there by signing up here: <http://tinyurl.com/SAVyes>. (No need to sign if you have done so already – we've got you.)

BUILDING LEVERAGE

Think about what just happened at California State University. The faculty union held a strike

authorization vote last fall, and 94 percent of voters said "yes." The union then announced that a five-day strike would take place across the huge Cal State system in April. On April 7, less than a week before the strike was scheduled to begin, the university administration met the union's key demand for a higher salary increase.

Political conditions and the legal environment in California are different from ours in New York, but a strong strike authorization vote and the organizing

that goes with it could give us similar power. The PSC leadership is committed to achieving a fair contract without a strike, but we cannot stop organizing – that is the lesson of Cal State.

PUBLIC SUPPORT

Our organizing this year has already given us power. Since last December, PSC members have sent 14,000 messages to Albany. We have held 156 meetings with legislators, and another 104 jointly with students. We have demonstrated at Milliken's apartment,

at CUNY headquarters, on our campuses and at the governor's office. We have organized nearly 100 faculty, staff and students in civil disobedience protests. We have joined an alliance with community, labor and student groups, and we have listened as 50 CUNY writers shared their work in a reading against austerity. Throughout, we have gained enormous public and media support.

The result is that our contract, even though it was not funded as part of the State budget, is recognized by Albany as an issue that must be addressed. The PSC leadership hopes to build on that recognition and bring the negotiation process to completion within the next two months. We will work with CUNY negotiators and with allies and legislators to achieve that goal. While we cannot promise that we will achieve all we want, we will be strategic and unrelenting in pursuit of a funded contract settlement.

A BIG FIGHT

Do your part! Vote "yes" on strike authorization between May 2 and May 11, and watch for messages about continuing pressure on Albany. You will soon receive full information about how to cast your ballot electronically, by phone or by mail (see page 4).

This is a big fight; that's why it is so hard. We are demanding more investment in public higher education when the trend is to educate on the cheap. We are standing for economic justice – for our students as well as ourselves – in a time of crushing economic inequality. I believe we are in a position to win.

I believe it is a fight we can win.



PSC President Barbara Bowen at the union's March 24 action outside the governor's Manhattan offices.

Dave Sanders