

Clarion

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2017



AGAINST TRUMP

Sanctuary campuses

PSC members joined with students to protect immigrants at CUNY, and have had some success.

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Erik McGregor

THE STRUGGLE FOR 2017

WHAT WE DO NOW

More than 1,000 PSC members participated in the women's march on New York on January 21, and hundreds more marched in Washington. Days later, before a joint state legislative panel, the PSC unveiled a proposal for transformative

funding for CUNY, calling for 1,000 new full-time faculty lines and an adjunct pay raise to \$7,000 per course. In this issue, we explore the struggles facing labor and the ways students, faculty, staff and communities are mobilizing.

TUITION

A critical look at the new plan

Governor Andrew Cuomo unveiled an ambitious plan to give students at CUNY and SUNY free tuition. But some advocates say it doesn't add up.

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WELFARE FUND

New, improved benefits

The PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund is happy to announce enhanced dental, vision and hearing benefits that have been long in the making.

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BRONX CC

Closing the pay gap

After vigorously studying the data, the BCC chapter realized how underpaid its members were. Members fought back, and won a mighty victory.

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CITY COUNCIL

Fixing campus decay

A PSC panel spoke out at a City Council higher education committee hearing on campus disrepair and its adverse impact on students' educations.

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

In defense of Democrats

● The recent letter to the editor by James Dennis Hoff (*Clarion*, November/December 2016) does little to help move the United States toward a more just and equitable society. It is based on the erroneous notion that elections don't matter. We have the harder challenge of penetrating the more representative and progressive political party given that in the US we do not have runoff elections that allow us to vote for our ideal candidate in the first round and our acceptable candidate in the second round.

Voting for a third party has moral repercussions. It gave us eight years of George W. Bush and now Donald Trump. Voting for Jill Stein has given her supporters a sense of self-righteousness, while relegating most Americans to a reality of economic regression and political absolutism. Control of the state is the key to producing public policies that redound to society-at-large. The state needs to be captured and the Green Party has no chance of capturing the state.

Hillary Clinton advocated for reversing the Supreme Court's Citizens United ruling on campaign financing, equal pay for women, laying the groundwork to invest in infrastructure, repairing schools, roads and bridges, investing in mass transit and supporting green energy firms. Bernie Sanders' left reformism demonstrated the clear possibility of shifting Democratic Party concerns in the direction of a single-payer health plan, free public college tuition, a \$15 hourly minimum wage, reinstating the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act separating commercial savings banks from investment banks, revving up the tax code on the wealthiest Americans and imposing a financial stock transaction tax, and opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Had she been elected, Clinton would have opened up to the social democratic reformism represented by the Sanders mass movement from below.

Peter Ranis, York College and Graduate Center, retiree

No more spoilers

● For giving the presidency to Donald Trump, third-party voters deserve much of the blame. The Democratic candidate deserved our support, if only because she stood against the GOP agenda to abolish labor unions, Obamacare and the Environmental Protection Agency. The Democratic candidate pledged to deal with college debt and college costs, support compassionate and comprehensive immigration reform, raise the minimum wage and defend reproductive rights.

How many people's lives are going to be ruined because of third-party voters? How many people were desperately praying for a raise in their meager wages or relief from college debt – and now will see neither? How many have fought

for women's rights and health care reform who will see their hard work go for nothing? How could we not do everything possible to keep a global warming denier out of the White House? Yet third-party voters gave him the keys. And for what – naive idealism? Sneering cynicism? Comfortable middle-class arrogance?

In the past, I always voted for the third party when my Democratic candidate was running on both lines. Not anymore.

Never has the truth been more obvious that the perfect is the enemy of the good. Now we also see that the purists hold nothing but callous disregard for the needs, hopes and welfare of the common people, the working people, the people Democrats steadfastly defend.

K.J. Walters, Lehman College

Use retro pay to fight

● After six years without a contract and an extra semester of disrespect from CUNY, we are finally getting retroactive salary increases this month. Many of us have plans for this money, long overdue – especially adjunct faculty, who, even

under this new contract, start at just \$3,200 per course.

The political context has changed radically since our strike authorization vote less than a year ago. Most significantly, the election of Donald Trump almost assuredly means that the Supreme Court – with his new appointee installed – will radically accelerate the gutting of public sector unions by ending the agency shop fee law. Indeed, the case that will do this – *Janus v. AFSCME* – is already making its way through the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

Simply put, we must make the 2017 contract fight our strongest, deepest and broadest fight in the history of the PSC. We can do this, but it will take work as well as money. When my retroactive pay comes this month, I am putting 10 percent of it in the union's Militancy Fund that we started last spring. In my view, in the new era we must prepare to fight like there is no tomorrow. We must be ready to defend and expand the CUNY project with the most powerful tools available. If we wait and watch while the newly balanced Supreme Court ravages

public sector unions, there may be no tomorrow.

I encourage anyone who is able, to also put 10 percent of their retroactive pay in the Militancy Fund. But, to be honest, your time is more important than your money. Learn about the structural change that is almost certainly coming to our union. Talk to your coworkers about it. Engage your union chapter: we need literally thousands of PSC campus activists to sign up some 5,000 agency fee payers, build maps of campus strengths and weaknesses, support and expand the CUNY Rising fight and build solidarity across the full membership, especially across the chasm between full- and part-time workers.

Let's get the PSC ready for the fight of our lives. If we prepare, there is hope.

Luke Elliott-Negri, Graduate Center

Correction

The November/December 2016 issue included a notice for elections with some erroneous dates. Ballots will be mailed April 3, 2017. Ballots are due April 27, 2017, at 5:00 pm in both contested and uncontested elections. Ballots will be counted April 28, 2017, at 10:00 am. We apologize for the confusion.

The issue also included testimony from Brooklyn College PSC Chapter

Chair James Davis to the City Council regarding the Pathways program. He wrote in to clarify his statement that the provost had obstructed faculty governance. Davis said, "The Brooklyn College provost's office forwarded the General Education program as part of a larger curriculum document to CUNY, which rejected the document the next day because the General Education component did not comply with Pathways."

LaborArts contest

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The online cultural group LaborArts has honored creative portrayals of work and workers in its annual contest Making Work Visible since 2010. CUNY undergraduates have a chance to win up to a \$1,000 award when they submit poetry, fiction, nonfiction or visual art in the contest that "aims to expand student engagement with the underappreciated history of work and workers in this country, and to revitalize the study of labor history at CUNY," as stated in the contest call on laborarts.org. The deadline to submit entries online is midnight on Monday, March 6, 2017.

VITAL CHANGE

"The LaborArts contest provides a vital and all-too-rare opportunity for CUNY students to think, write and create art about labor – their own labor, the labor of their family members, friends and neighbors, and the labor that makes our city run," Joseph Entin, an associate professor in the Brooklyn College English department, told *Clarion*. Entin is the contest's coordinator and is working on expanding the pool of students who participate. "So many of our students are workers themselves, or hail from working-class families, and LaborArts offers students a chance to reflect on and respond to that work through art."

Winning entries from last year's contest include a narrative reflection on the labor activism of Chinese-American garment workers, an acrylic painting of barbers trimming hair in a Bronx barbershop and a poem about stacking boxes of tangelos in a grocery store. For contest details, go to laborarts.org/contest or email contest officials Joseph Entin and Patrick Kavanagh at mww@brooklyn.cuny.edu.

CLTs discuss issues for 2017



College Laboratory Technicians PSC Chapter Chair Albert Sherman, at podium, addressing a December meeting of CLTs, where members raised the need for promotions, reduced workloads, job security for adjunct CLTs and wage increases.

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Union calls for full funding at CUNY

By ARI PAUL

The PSC's verdict on Governor Andrew Cuomo's budget proposal for CUNY is in: It's a start, but it's not enough to recover from years of underfunding.

PSC President Barbara Bowen and other higher education union leaders spoke about the budget proposal before a joint hearing of the State Senate Finance Committee and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee on January 24.

Bowen unveiled the union's proposed four-year investment plan, one that would avoid putting the burden on tuition increases. In the first year of that plan, she said, Albany should move toward full funding with an additional \$298 million, which would add \$80 million to hire 1,000 new full-time faculty members and add \$40 million to increase adjunct wages to \$7,000 a course in five years.

Bowen laid out sobering statis-

Response to Cuomo's budget

tical truths about the historic underfunding of CUNY, such as how full-time enrollment at senior colleges increased by 10 percent from 2008 to 2015, but in that same time period, per-student funding from the state fell 17 percent, when adjusted for inflation. Full-time enrollment increased 23 percent at community colleges over the same period, with a 5-percent drop in per-student state funding, when adjusted for inflation.

NUMBERS GAME

The governor's plan calls for a \$30 million increase for senior colleges, a part of a proposed \$2.5 billion in state support for CUNY, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. Cuomo also unveiled a new scholarship plan (see story below) in January.

"The executive budget shows a nominal increase of \$107 million

in operating support over the last fiscal year. We appreciate the appropriation of \$36.2 million to cover increased fringe benefits costs in the University's operating budget and \$456.6 million in capital funding, including double the funds for critical maintenance approved last year," Bowen said in prepared testimony. "Otherwise, however, the state's public investment in CUNY's operating budget remains essentially flat with no other increase to the senior colleges, graduate school and University programs except for added revenue from a proposed tuition increase. There is an addition of \$7.1 million due to higher enrollments at the community colleges, but there is no increase to community college base aid. Base aid remains at \$2,697 per [full-time equivalent] student."

"The University's budget request includes a proposal for New York

City to provide \$10 million to offset the cost of the [Tuition Assistance Program, or] TAP tuition waiver credits and close the TAP gap," she said. "The PSC supports this call for more support from the city and urges the State Legislature to provide \$41 million in funding to close the remainder of the gap."

CUNY'S VIEW

Chancellor James B. Milliken offered a competing three-year plan that he said would add full-time faculty and advisor positions. "By 2021, the chancellor aims to double the three-year graduation rate for students pursuing associate degrees, which is now about 18 percent," the *Wall Street Journal* reported. "By 2024, Milliken wants to raise by 10 percentage points the six-year graduation rate for bachelor's programs, now about 55 percent."

The Young Invincibles, a partner in the CUNY Rising coalition,

denounced the underfunding on CUNY in prepared remarks.

"Governor Cuomo's FY18 Executive Budget Proposal proposes five more years of annual \$250 tuition hikes and does not increase TAP awards. The legislature should reject the proposed tuition hikes, increase the maximum TAP award to \$6,500 and index it to tuition so when tuition increases, so do TAP awards for all students," the group said. During the academic year of 2015, the average TAP award for CUNY students at senior colleges was \$1,947.68, accounting

Albany should provide full funding.

for only 30 percent of tuition costs, currently at \$6,330. Unfortunately, because the erosion of state support to public higher education has caused tuition to skyrocket, cost is quickly outpacing TAP awards. The average award is worth significantly less than it was only a decade ago."

Cuomo's tuition plan full of questions, few answers

By ARI PAUL

It's a great idea, right?

Governor Andrew Cuomo's first policy proposal of his 2017 legislative agenda was unveiled on January 3 at LaGuardia Community College – to provide free tuition for full-time SUNY and CUNY students from households earning less than \$125,000 a year. Beside him was not a bureaucrat or an aide, but the new patron saint of revived New Deal liberalism, independent US Senator Bernie Sanders from Vermont, who ran for president last year on a social democratic platform that included a national free college program.

DETAILS, DETAILS

Cuomo's new Excelsior Scholarship is hardly that. For the governor, rumored to be planning a run for the White House in 2020, the move, if successful, would – on paper – add to a list of progressive accomplishments that include securing a \$15 hourly minimum wage for many workers, instituting marriage equality and banning fracking. But for many public education advocates, the proposal leaves many key questions unanswered, many that are likely to be asked and discussed once the state assembly and senate higher education committees hold hearings later this year.

Firstly, around the state, lawmakers and editorial boards questioned the dollar figure assigned to the \$163 million plan. "If it's so little, why haven't we done it before?" asked Democrat Deborah J. Glick, chair of the assembly's higher education committee. Assemblyman James Skoufis told *Clarion*, "there should be a 'b' next to that number not an 'm.'" While the governor, whose executive budget in-

Not enough funding for program



Senator Bernie Sanders, left, joined Governor Andrew Cuomo in announcing the Excelsior Scholarship.

cluded an extra \$1 billion for education, called the initial figure a "rounding error," the figure seemed woefully low in the eyes of CUNY advocates who say

it wouldn't solve the state's underfunding of both the SUNY and CUNY system, especially after the governor's willingness to threaten a \$485 million state funding cut to CUNY just last year. For PSC members, what is needed is full investment from the state for the long term. Sharon Utakis, PSC chapter chair at Bronx Community College, told *Clarion*, "CUNY needs to be fully funded to make sure that our students get a quality education, which requires, among other things, fairly paid faculty and staff with secure positions."

And that's where the trouble really starts. According to PSC research, this is a deferred payment program in which students receive

Lawmakers ... questioned the dollar figure.

scholarships after completing 15 credits while maintaining a C average, and only then does the college get paid. If a student fails, the college, operating already on a tight budget, must eat the cost or bill the student. This comes as the governor announced an executive budget that adds virtually no new state funding to CUNY senior or community colleges.

The governor's proposal is the result of political pressure from grassroots efforts pushing for more public university affordability in the

state, and from legislative moves to reduce student costs by Assemblyman Skoufis and City Council Higher Education Committee Chair Inez Barron. Assemblyman Skoufis welcomed the governor's move, but noted that their plans differed – for example, the assemblyman's bill would require that graduates who take advantage of a tuition waiver live in New York State for five years, and require that if they leave, they repay their waiver like a student loan. "The logic being that if we're going to invest in you as a student, we don't want to see you pick up your stakes and leave after graduating," he said in a phone interview. "That's an element worth discussing."

An increase in state funding for higher education is critical, because for two-year colleges this move potentially places a larger cost burden on New York City.

EDITORIAL DISSENT

"Making higher education affordable for all must entail more than a shift in expenses from students to state," said an editorial from the *Democrat and Chronicle* of Rochester, New York. "It is critical that our public universities implement innovative and equally progressive measures to stem rising costs and increase accessibility in the 21st century."

Newsday editors wrote, "This is not an open-enrollment plan; there's no requirement for schools to accept more students. But the plan expects more students to graduate on time. That could strain resources like faculty, classrooms, labs and materials."

The article continued, "Even with free tuition, students have to be committed to an education funded by taxpayers. Cuomo's deal would cover full-time students, and pay for four years, incentivizing on-time graduation. And the free ride wouldn't extend to room, board, books or fees. Whether those factors would be enough skin in the game remains to be seen."

OTHER COSTS

That last point is key, as the college board noted that room and board costs on average exceed tuition costs nationally for two- and four-year public colleges, and the costs for text books averages \$1,300, while the annual cost for transport to and from school av-

Continued on page 11

CUNY Rising releases white paper on cost

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

CUNY Rising, an alliance of community, labor and student leaders, released a new white paper calling on Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio to uphold their post-election promises to protect vulnerable New Yorkers.

Standing together on the steps of City Hall for a joint press conference on December 7, the coalition urged the city and state to reverse years of CUNY disinvestment and allow the University to uphold its mission to deliver high-quality education accessible to all New Yorkers. Community and higher education advocates called for the phasing in of \$2 billion in public funding, an amount that they say would allow CUNY to provide free higher education to New Yorkers.

In an impassioned speech, PSC President Barbara Bowen spoke about developing a “new vision of funding” for CUNY, saying, “[We’re] demanding that we rethink the agenda that has said for too long that CUNY is going to have to scrape by.”

The event marked the release of the CUNY Rising White Paper, which advances a plan to fund free, high-quality education for all CUNY students. The report also details how years of defunding public higher education has led to high tuition and unsafe and out-of-date learning environments. The paper stated that from 2008 to 2015, CUNY senior colleges reported a 17-percent drop in per-student funding, while two-year colleges reported a 5-percent drop (when adjusted for inflation). It also called for the expansion of services offered, including the nationally acclaimed college advisement initiative Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), which has been shown to significantly improve college completion rates. For a copy of the CUNY Rising White Paper, go to tinyurl.com/CUNY-Rising-White-Paper.

Included below are excerpts from several of the day’s speeches. Others who spoke, but whose statements do not appear below, include Kevin Stump of the Young Invincibles, Natasha Capers of the NYC Coalition for Education Justice, Bill Lipton of the Working Families Party, Flor Reyes-Silvestre of the Lehman College DREAM Team, Seshat Mack of the Black Youth Project 100 and Zakiyah Ansari of the Alliance for Quality Education of New York.

BARBARA BOWEN, PRESIDENT OF THE PSC

What’s happening today is very exciting: the release of this white paper. Because we have groups coming together – student groups, community groups, faculty and staff groups, labor throughout the city – saying that CUNY is central to the survival of New York City. We knew that several months ago, but we know it even more now.

And what we have done...is call not for just a tiny bit of change, not

Allies come together



Public Advocate Letitia James joined CUNY Rising for the release of the white paper.

for just being on the defensive all the time, not just for fighting against the idea that CUNY should always be poor, but actually demanding a new vision of funding for CUNY, demanding that we rethink the agenda that has said for too long that CUNY is going to have to scrape by.

We are saying, “No, there is enough money,” and there is still enough money in this rich city and this rich state to allow for free tuition and top-quality education at CUNY. And if the city and state care – truly care – about the more than half million people who go to CUNY who are largely Latino, African American, Asian, people who are largely people of color, poor people – if the city and state really care, then it is simple: put the money in to make sure that CUNY students and their families can have the education that they deserve. That’s what we’re calling for, starting now.

LETITIA JAMES, PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

[A CUNY student’s] reported household income is on average less than \$30,000. And 38 percent [of households] reported less than \$20,000. These are the working poor of our city who yearn for an education, who yearn for success, who recognize that a college degree provides so many opportunities. And these are students who would likely, like myself, not be in a position to pursue college anywhere because...the average [annual] college tuition at a private institution is \$32,000, and most individuals in low-income families are not in a position to afford that.

More than 40 percent of CUNY undergraduates were born outside of the United States and 44 percent are children of immigrants. If we are truly a country or a city that embraces immigrants, we have to open up the doors to higher education for all individuals, but in particular to

our immigrants.

And many of these students, who are the first in their families to go to college, students who might not have the needed documentation to attend another school, it’s really critically important that we open up their doors. And for them, CUNY is a dream, an invaluable dream. It is a resource to achieve the American dream that all of us yearn for.

But in order for CUNY to continue providing the education to these students, we, as government, we as taxpayers, we as New Yorkers have a responsibility. If you complain

about the cost of social services, if you complain about those living on the dole, if you complain about high taxes, the key to all of that is higher education, is to making sure that individuals realize their dreams, that they are self actualized.

We know that CUNY is the most significant education and economic enhancement tool for the city’s 2.3 million Latino residents. And so we want to make sure that our leaders are rethinking their vision around CUNY [and] are not going to play this sort of budget dance...over who is going to pay for CUNY. We need a more robust vision to make sure that CUNY can continue to get stronger and ultimately become a free institution for all who choose to have a public higher education.

BRYAN WIGFALL, CUNY COALITION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Disabled CUNY students lack adequate and accessible space to study, meet, as well as socialize outside class. Having adequate, accessible space where students and staff can engage with one another should be part of a higher-quality education. CUNY faculties are often too worn-out to accommodate disabled students, faculty and staff. Libraries throughout CUNY often do not have software on computers that disabled students need to use.

Investments in various forms of technology, including accessible technology for students with disabilities, remain inadequate to support the growing needs of students and faculty. An investment in infra-

structural resources at CUNY can provide students with the learning spaces, library materials and access to technology available to their counterparts at private institutions, [thus] provid[ing] a quality higher education in the 21st century.

DESIREE GREENIDGE, BMCC STUDENT AND NYPIRG BOARD MEMBER

Not only am I a student, but I also work at the Financial Aid Office at BMCC. I see firsthand the need for the services that opportunity programs provide. In many cases, these are programs that offer low-income students the services that they need to be successful in college. At the BMCC Financial Aid Office, students come in regularly looking for help with mounting transportation, textbook and other costs. The New York Public Interest Research Group also joined a national survey of hunger on campus and found that nearly half of the students and survey respondents reported experiencing food insecurity in the past 30 days.

Such costs can become a roadblock for students to get their college degree. It’s clear that further support is needed for CUNY students that goes beyond simply covering tuition. Opportunity programs have done a great job tackling the outside costs of going to college, but there aren’t nearly enough spots available to accommodate the number of students who qualify. This is why the Student Bill of Rights demands full support for opportunity programs to meet the demands of students’ needs today.

White paper highlights

Lawmakers should approach “free” from two directions. From one side, financial aid should be expanded to help more low-income and working families. From the other side, increases in city and state support should fund first a tuition freeze and then reductions in the sticker price of tuition. Replacing tuition not covered by financial aid for CUNY’s senior and community colleges would cost \$784 million. For CUNY to be truly accessible, aid for books, transportation, food, housing and other costs of attendance should be provided for those who need it.

CUNY NEEDS 4,000 MORE FULL-TIME FACULTY

Seventy percent of instruction should be provided by full-time faculty. Four thousand new full-time faculty lines are required to reach that goal. Adding 4,000 new full-time faculty lines would require a net increase in CUNY’s funding of roughly \$325 million dollars per year. The first step should be an investment by the state and city in 1,000 new full-time faculty lines at

a cost of roughly \$81 million per year.

ADJUNCTS SHOULD BE PAID \$7,000 PER COURSE

Adjunct faculty should have pay and working conditions that are supportive of quality education. Paying adjuncts a parity salary rate of \$7,000 per course, pegged to the salary of CUNY’s full-time lecturers, would require \$92 million from the city and state if 30 percent of CUNY courses are taught by adjuncts.

CUNY should be free.

CUNY NEEDS BIG INVESTMENTS IN STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The city and state should provide the funding necessary to scale up CUNY’s student success programs and increase the number of students who have access.

Approximately 800 new academic advisors should be hired at a cost of about \$50 million, so all CUNY students can have high-contact advisement.

City funding for campus-based, low-cost childcare should be tripled

from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million. State funding should be increased as well.

ALBANY AND CITY HALL MUST INVEST IN CUNY’S PHYSICAL PLANT

The city and state should increase capital funding to CUNY to construct more classrooms, labs and other learning spaces. Funding for critical maintenance must be increased to speed the University’s rate of repair and upgrade. Adequate staffing levels and resources for campus maintenance must be provided for in the CUNY operating budget and funded by the city and state so day-to-day repairs can be quickly accomplished.

Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) demonstrates what CUNY can accomplish for students when the University receives sufficient public funding. The program is well-funded, providing free tuition, enriched teaching, high-contact advisement and robust support services. ASAP students are required to attend full-time, but are provided the resources that allow them to do so. ASAP students have their remaining tuition waived if they don’t receive full financial aid. Textbooks and unlimited MetroCards are also provided to ASAP students, relieving them of some of the stressful demands of balancing work and studies.

Brooklyn College adjuncts rally for 'pay parity'

By ARI PAUL

Brooklyn College adjunct liaison for the PSC Yasmin Gruss asked a crowd of more than two dozen adjunct faculty members gathered outside Boylan Hall to "make some noise if you don't know if you have a job next semester," and the members roared.

Later, when Brooklyn College PSC Chapter Chair James Davis asked how the precarious nature of adjunct labor affected members' personal lives, one shouted, "I can't sleep." Another said, "I'm on Medicaid." Another said, "I can't pay my rent."

FIRST STEP

The rally, held on the college quad on December 8, was planned as the first step in a push for adjuncts university-wide to spread awareness to students and full-time faculty about the increased use of adjunct instructors over the years, as well as the low pay many endure. "Students don't know how this affects them," Gruss said, noting that adjunct professors often have to work other jobs in order to make ends meet, making it impossible for them to spend extra

More actions to come



PSC members gathered statements of support from faculty, staff and students.

time on campus to be available for students. "We can't be here to support our students."

She added, "Students value their education, and this pokes a hole in

that – that their teachers are being paid so low."

Ultimately, the rally-goers demanded that all CUNY adjuncts receive pay parity with full-time fac-

ulty members. Gruss admitted that this is "a big ask," but hoped that this call would amplify adjuncts' voices and concerns over the next year as the union gears up for another contract campaign with CUNY.

AFFECTING STUDENTS

"Students assume we're well compensated and they see how much work we do," said Heidi Diehl, an adjunct lecturer in the English department. "They're stunned when I tell them how much we're paid."

On average, according to the chapter, an adjunct instructor at CUNY receives about \$3,500 per semester per class, and there are about 900 adjunct instructors at Brooklyn College. Adjuncts note that this means that, unlike full-time faculty, they aren't compensated for much of the academic work they do outside the classroom, like one-on-one mentoring of students.

Adjuncts also note that they are often left with doubt about their teaching load until a semester begins. However, the new PSC contract with CUNY ushers in some longer term appointments for adjuncts.

The Brooklyn College adjuncts,

along with full-time faculty members who joined them in solidarity, marched through the quad at lunchtime, stopping to speak to students about the conditions of adjunct labor and how students can help.

"Education is important," said undergraduate student Sheharyar Jafri. "Teachers' morale goes down if they have low pay. More pay, better teaching."

Diehl noted that she had an administrative job at the college in addition to teaching in order to pay her bills, and that it was common for adjunct instructors at CUNY to have teaching assignments at other colleges or even jobs in the retail and service sectors.

KEEP FIGHTING

"So much of our labor is being taken advantage of," said Raffi Kureghian, an adjunct lecturer in the English department.

He noted that the PSC contingent of adjuncts should keep agitating against the CUNY administration throughout the year, otherwise, "there is no reason for them to create stable, livable jobs for people like us."

CUNY, unions can fight climate change

By STEVEN WISHNIA

"After this election, we really need to organize," Queens College geology professor Stephen Pekar told a PSC forum on climate change on November 30 – a week before then-President-elect Donald Trump nominated climate-change denier Scott Pruitt to head the Environmental Protection Agency. With the CUNY system encompassing more than 20 campuses and more than 500,000 students, said moderator and PSC retiree Nancy Romer, "We have the capacity to have a huge effect."

HOTTEST YEARS

"Hominids have never seen anything like this," Pekar, who specializes in paleoclimatology, warned. Carbon-dioxide levels in the atmosphere have risen from 280 parts per million to 400 since the Industrial Revolution. Those levels haven't been that high in three million years, he said, adding that 2015 was the hottest year on record, 1.62 degrees Celsius above the 20th-century average. (After the event, NASA confirmed that 2016 was even hotter.) If carbon dioxide emissions continue at their current pace, Pekar said, the Earth will be 5 degrees Celsius hotter by 2100 – a climate change as extreme as the Ice Age. A 2-degree Celsius increase 125,000 years ago partially melted the West Antarctic ice sheet and raised sea levels by 20 feet.

It is utterly absurd to claim that this warming is coming from natural causes, said Pekar. Natural causes of climate change operate on a scale of 1,000 to 1 million years. Any attempt to explain it without

Now more than ever

"anthropogenic" causes – destruction of forests and carbon dioxide, methane, and aerosol emissions – simply doesn't match the data.

"We really need to end fossil fuels immediately," Pekar said.

ACTION NEEDED

What can CUNY and its faculty and staff do to help accomplish that? Ideas broached by the three panelists and some of the people in the audience fell into three categories: using CUNY's resources to educate people about climate change, trying to make CUNY and related institutions operate more sustainably, and working

with community groups to organize for better policies.

Fighting climate change should be a part of the college curriculum, said panelists Elizabeth Yeampierre, executive director of UPROSE, a Latino community group in Brooklyn's Sunset Park neighborhood, and longtime activist Leslie Cagan, who is organizing a march on Washington scheduled for April 29. Economics, technology and urban studies all have an environmental aspect, Pekar said, and knowledge is crucial when the media didn't ask a single question about climate change during the presidential debates.



Queens College geology professor Stephen Pekar speaking about the importance of organizing to fight climate change.

Others suggested holding workshops and classes on climate change and putting out guides to environmental sustainability. John Jay College already has a course on sustainability, Pekar said.

A GREENER CUNY?

CUNY "should be 100 percent solar, if that is possible," one woman in the audience urged. (The savings, she added, should be used to reduce tuition and pay adjuncts more.) In New York City, Cagan said, 70 percent of emissions come from large buildings, but getting Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration and the state government to commit to converting public buildings to renewable energy "hasn't been so easy."

The obstacles are more political than technological. Solar-reflector technology that concentrates heat, said Pekar, enables 24-hour power generation and ends the "cloudy days" dilemma.

Others suggested requiring all CUNY vendors to be environmentally sustainable businesses, and enlisting unions to pressure CUNY and the city and state pension funds to divest from fossil fuels.

The transition away from an extractive economy is essential, but it has to be just, Yeampierre said – it must preserve blue-collar jobs. One thing CUNY economists could do to help is advise people on how to do that, for example, on how to finance building and running community-owned solar-power production.

The state government authorizes local governments to buy solar power from private contractors, but these agreements usually don't require union labor or local hiring, said Jon Forster of the Civil Service Technical Guild, Local 375 of District Council 37.

BROAD CHANGE

The old saying "think globally, act locally" is particularly appropriate, said Cagan, because it's difficult to organize on a global scale. Climate change can only be stopped with broader social change, said Pekar, and consumer choices help, but they're not enough. "Laws are more important than changing light bulbs," Pekar said.

The next steps, said Graduate Center sociology student Darren Kwong, a member of the PSC's Environmental Justice Working Committee, include "trying to continue building capacity," working more with student groups, and mobilizing for the April 29 march on Washington.

Union wins improved dental, vision

Dear Colleagues,

Many of us are rightly focused on the salary increases and retroactive pay that CUNY is finally paying this month, but another important financial benefit of the new contract has already begun. As of January 1, 2017, Welfare Fund dental, vision and hearing benefits have been substantially improved for all Fund participants, including full-time faculty and staff, retirees, adjuncts who receive NYC health insurance through CUNY, and eligible dependents. The improvements are a direct financial benefit because they lower the costs of essential care, allowing you to keep more of your salary.

How are such improvements possible in this age of austerity, especially austerity in health care? Because PSC members fought for them and won when we insisted on a non-austerity contract. And because the union campaigned for more than a decade to have CUNY – not the Welfare Fund – provide health insurance for eligible adjuncts, as it does for full-timers. These union victories, together with careful management by the Welfare Fund staff, have made possible the most substantial benefit improvements the Fund has made in years.

GOOD CHANGES

Take a look below at the difference the improved benefits could make for your own health and finances.

- Prescription lenses, including progressive lenses, high-index lenses, ultra-thin lenses, UV-coated lenses and many other specialized lenses, are now available at network providers at no cost every 24 months. Many members will save hundreds of dollars on glasses or contacts.
- In-network reimbursements for expensive dental procedures such as crowns and root canals will increase substantially. If you use a Guardian dentist, 60 to 75 percent of the cost will be covered, depending on the procedure.
- The cost of hearing aids has dropped dramatically, as the Welfare Fund has negotiated a new range of in-network prices and doubled the previous subsidy for this benefit available every 36 months.

CUNY faculty, staff and retirees who use in-network benefits will have access to full-service dental, vision and hearing care at a cost that we hope will be within financial reach, and in some cases, at no cost.

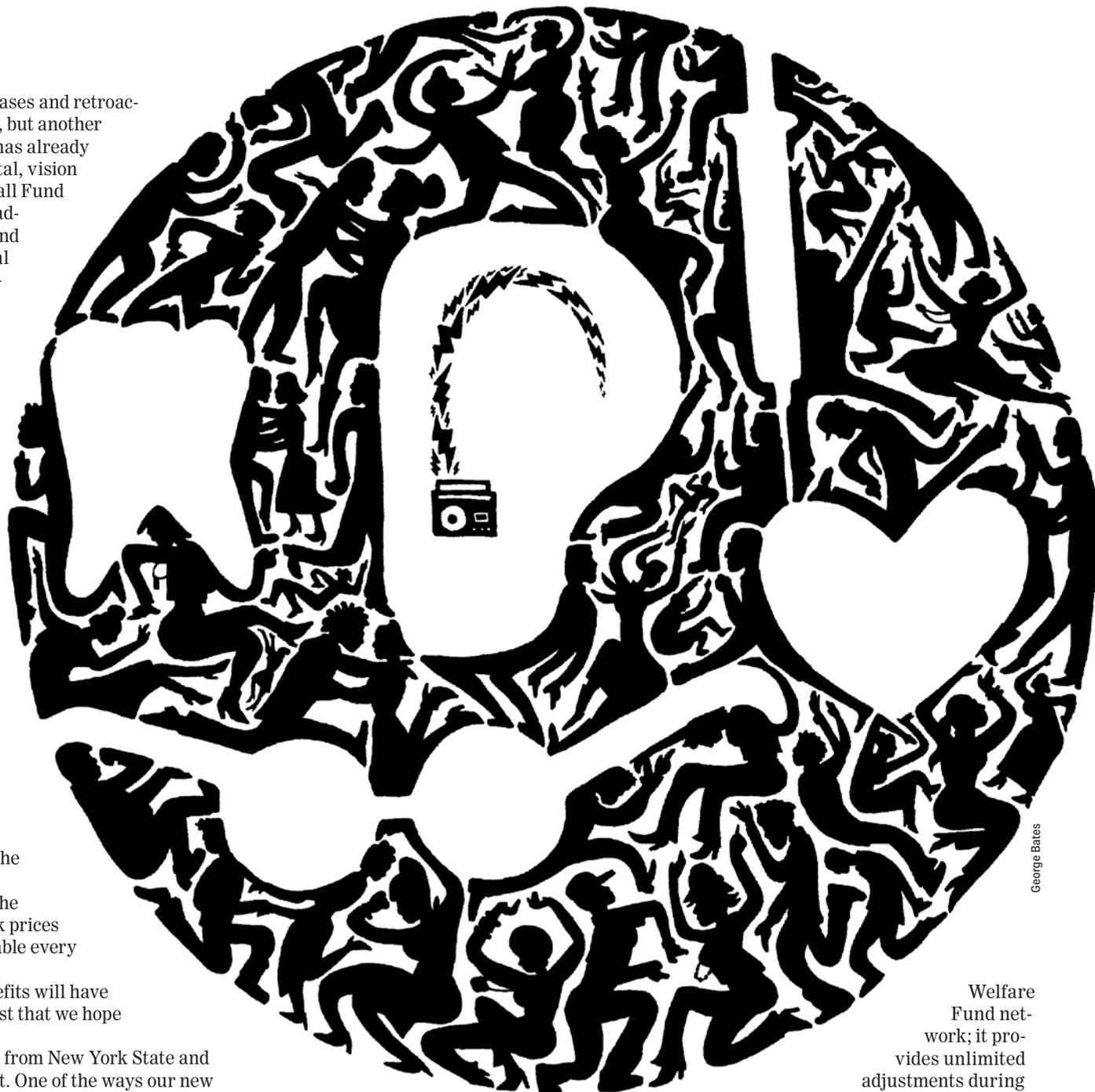
The Welfare Fund is supported by money CUNY receives from New York State and New York City, negotiated by the union through the contract. One of the ways our new contract does more than simply keep up with inflation is by enhancing essential benefits.

The PSC is one of very few unions that has been able to win enhanced health benefits for our members in this period of artificial austerity. We are also one of the few public-sector unions in New York City committed to maintaining the same benefits for retired and in-service members, and almost unique in securing new supplemental health benefits for eligible adjuncts. All of us should be proud of these commitments; they are part of the union's practice of fighting for equity and fairness. Health benefits affect us all and are an equity issue: the same \$500 saved on dental or eyeglass costs represents a larger portion of salary for lower-paid members than for higher-paid ones.

IN THE NETWORK

The key to all of the enhancements is the provider network. The benefit improvements are based on the principle that a large group, such as ours, has power to negotiate for the best quality and value when we work with a network. Most of us are familiar with the concept of in-network health providers from our primary health insurance. The same concept applies here. While the Welfare Fund also increased out-of-network reimbursements as of January 1, the biggest increases are for in-network care.

I urge you to learn about the new benefits and use the networks. On the website, enter your ZIP code and look up the opticians in your neighborhood who participate in our network; you may be surprised to learn, as I was, that the independent optician you currently use already participates in the Welfare Fund network. Your lenses or contacts at an in-network optician may now be free, and selected frames will also be free. Or consider switching to a Guardian dentist, at least for expensive specialized procedures like root canals or for children's orthodontia. On the website, using PPO as our plan, find a Guardian dentist or specialist convenient for you. You could save hundreds of dollars. If you have been hesitant to try a hearing aid because of the cost or complexity, try the



George Bates

Welfare Fund network; it provides unlimited adjustments during the first year and insurance against loss.

Contractual health benefits are especially precious now with the Affordable Care Act targeted for repeal and uncertainty about its replacement. The Welfare Fund trustees, who include members from CUNY management as well as the PSC, are acutely conscious of potential health policy changes and took a fiscally conservative approach to enhancing benefits. We will continue to monitor the impact of any policy changes and will preserve the financial stability of the Welfare Fund. The trustees also determined that the greatest impact on members' lives with the money available could be achieved by addressing the dental, vision and hearing benefits rather than the prescription drug plan. The Fund recently switched to a new pharmaceutical provider, CVS Caremark, and needs more experience with the provider before considering other investments.

GETTING THE INFO

Details about the benefits were sent last December by the Welfare Fund, are posted on the Welfare Fund website, and will appear in brochures being sent to you by each of the network providers. Please read them carefully and don't hesitate to call the Welfare Fund at (212) 354-5230 if you have questions.

Use the benefits, stay well, and keep in fighting trim! We will need our entire collective strength to protect our health, our salaries, our students and our profession in the years ahead.

In solidarity,
Barbara Bowen
President, PSC/CUNY

PSC members fought for these benefits and won...

vision and hearing benefits

SUMMARY OF BENEFIT ENHANCEMENTS

The new benefits are available to all participants in the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund: adjuncts on NYC health insurance, in-service and retired full-timers and eligible dependents.

DENTAL: GUARDIAN DENTALGUARD PREFERRED NETWORK

As of January 1, 2017, members and their dependents participating in the Guardian dental plan will see a substantial increase in the amount the Fund pays the dental provider (reimbursement schedule) for most dental procedures, such as crowns, dentures, child orthodontia and implants, when obtained through a Guardian-participating provider. For those who use Guardian dentists, out-of-pocket costs for many dental procedures will decrease significantly for procedures performed on or after January 1, 2017.

GREATER DENTAL REIMBURSEMENTS

Guardian network dentists charge substantially less than their usual and customary fee to Guardian-participating members. As of January 1, 2017, the Fund has increased the reimbursement schedule for Guardian providers with the expectation that members who receive treatment from a Guardian dentist will have, on average, 60 to 75 percent of their costs covered, depending on the procedure.

The out-of-network reimbursement schedules are also enhanced for some emergency, non-preventive procedures (e.g., fillings and root canals).

The reimbursement schedules for preventive services, such as cleaning and exams, remain unchanged for both in- and out-of-network providers. For in-network preventive procedures, the previous reimbursement schedule met,

on average, 80 percent of costs.

The new reimbursement schedules are in effect as of January 1, 2017. Full details are available on the Welfare Fund website. Delta Dental HMO participants will continue under the current plan terms.

VISION: PSC-CUNY WELFARE FUND DAVIS VISION PREMIER COLLECTION

The Fund has contracted with Davis Vision to be the exclusive network provider for glasses and contact lenses. For most prescriptions, members who use the extensive network of Davis Vision providers will be able to obtain an eye exam, frames and lenses, and contact lenses free of charge. Members who choose to use non-network providers for vision correction are eligible for a \$200 direct reimbursement, which is double the previous amount.

The Davis Vision network includes their own stores called Visionworks and also a large number of participating in-network private practice opticians and optometrists throughout the metropolitan area and nationally. A full list of participating providers is available on the Davis Vision website. Some members may find that their current provider is already in the Davis Vision network. Retirees who live outside of New York State are already covered under a Davis Vision exclusive network plan.

EVERY 24 MONTHS

The full range of Davis Premier Collection eyeglass frames and Premium Collection contact lenses is available free of charge. Photo-sensitive lenses, premium progressive lenses, ultra anti-reflective coating and many other enhancements are also included free of charge.

If you use an in-network vision provider and select a frame that is not in the Davis Premier Collection or contact lenses that are not in the Davis Premium Collection, you will receive a discount on the frames or contacts, plus a store credit. Full details are available on



the Welfare Fund website. If you use a non-network provider, you will be eligible for a direct reimbursement once every 24 months at the new level of \$200.

FREE FRAMES AND LENSES

Vision Benefits are available to all covered members and dependents once every 24 months. Eligible dependent children under 19 years old, however, are eligible for benefits once every 12 months, but only when the off-year services are rendered by a participating Davis Vision provider.

As of January 1, 2017, the Fund has ended its contract with General Vision Services. Members who wish to continue using their GVS provider will still be able to apply for the \$200 out-of-network member reimbursement.

HEARING: HEARUSA NETWORK

On January 1, 2017, the Welfare Fund introduced a major improvement in its coverage of hearing aids. The Fund has contracted with HearUSA to be an exclusive network provider of hearing aids. HearUSA has a national network of 4,000 providers, including HearUSA stores and private-practice audiologists. Members and their eligible dependents are eligible for either an in-network or an out-of-network benefit once every 36 months.

The new benefit works for Welfare Fund participants and their eligible dependents in five ways:

- The Fund has contracted for reduced prices on high-quality

hearing aids through the HearUSA network and has increased the amount the Fund will contribute towards the purchase. The former plan coverage was often insufficient to cover expenses for even one hearing aid. Audiologists have advised that the best practice is to provide two hearing aids even if there is hearing loss in only one ear.

- HearUSA has guaranteed a discounted price on all hearing aids for covered Welfare Fund par-



ticipants and their eligible dependents. The discounted prices range from \$895 to \$2,250 per hearing aid, depending on the features selected. These prices represent a substantial discount

from market prices; for example, a premium hearing aid averages \$4,000 for each ear.

- In addition to the lower prices negotiated by the Fund, the Fund will also subsidize the cost of an in-network hearing aid. The Fund will contribute up to \$750 per hearing aid, regardless of the cost, for a total subsidy of \$1,500. That amount represents a doubling of the current in-network benefit.
- The Welfare Fund has negotiated with HearUSA a number of service guarantees, including three years of free batteries and a 60-day trial and return policy. HearUSA will also provide a "loaner" hearing aid should your hearing aid malfunction and need to be repaired. HearUSA covers 11 different manufacturers and maintains extensive quality control measures.
- Some Fund participants who purchased hearing aids using the Fund's previous, much-lower subsidy within the last two years may want to purchase new hearing aids in 2017. For such members who purchased hearing aids in 2015, a \$500 voucher is available. For members who purchased hearing aids in 2016, a \$750 voucher is available. Vouchers may be used only toward the purchase of new hearing aids in 2017.

Members who decide to go out of network will continue to be eligible for a maximum \$500 direct reimbursement. As of January 1, 2017, the Fund has ended its contract with General Hearing Services.



PSC joins student call for a 'sanctuary campus'

By ARI PAUL

As Sangeeta Bishop, chair of the department of social sciences, human services and criminal justice at Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) recalls, the faculty, staff and student organizing around making the campus a "sanctuary campus" for undocumented immigrants was almost immediate after election day.

"We drew up a petition. Overnight we had about 180 signatures from our faculty and staff, and we had an open forum for students within a couple of days of the election," she said, noting that both BMCC President Antonio Pérez and Provost Karrin Wilks attended the forum. "There's awareness. We do have some kind of activity in the sense that the administration is interested in providing some legal support services for undocumented students so that students can get ideas and find out about their rights. That's something BMCC is providing."

All across the country, immigration activists have been scrambling since the election of Donald Trump, who has promised that his administration will be tough on undocumented immigrants. It has raised fears that federal authorities could conduct massive raids, with the cooperation of university officials, even in places as liberal and welcoming to immigrants as New York City. CUNY faculty, staff and students have been organizing city-wide to ensure that both campus administrations and the central CUNY administration do everything in their power to protect this potentially vulnerable population at CUNY.

FEAR ABOUNDS

Trump's campaign and victory has sparked deep fear for immigrant communities across the country – everything from his plan to build a wall with Mexico to calling immigrants rapists to his immigration ban for people from certain Muslim countries has proven that the anti-immigration rhetoric of this administration is unmatched by any Republican national campaign in recent memory. Even if Trump's most draconian proposals do not come to fruition, hundreds of hate crimes have already been committed around the country since Trump's election, including several in New York City against CUNY students. CUNY immigration advocates take these threats extremely seriously and have begun to organize accordingly.

This has led coalitions at several campuses to pressure their administrations to declare their colleges sanctuary campuses, where administrations pledge not to cooperate with federal attempts to locate and detain undocumented immigrants on campus.

Thanks to organizing by the PSC and fellow activists, several campus meetings on the issue have already taken place and CUNY Central ad-

Protecting CUNY's immigrants



Students, faculty and staff formed a human chain around John Jay College's main building in calling for a 'sanctuary campus.'

ministration has initiated concrete steps toward protecting immigrants – although more needs to be done, advocates said.

At the heart of the matter is the 2012 Obama administration policy known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which prevents deportation of undocumented immigrants brought to the United States as children. Advocates fear that a Trump administration could scrap the program, potentially putting thousands of immigrant students on CUNY campuses at risk.

Arianna Martinez, a LaGuardia Community College associate professor of social science, said that students and faculty circulated a petition last November calling on the administration to declare LaGuardia a sanctuary campus, and that by the time the newly formed coalition held a December 1 rally, it had collected 300 faculty signatures and 300 student signatures.

Faculty and students delivered the petition to LaGuardia President Gail Mellow at the rally, Martinez said, and Mellow met with the three faculty members and half dozen students about their demands. In the meeting, the president agreed to set up an ad hoc committee of staff, faculty, students and administrators to address immigrant students' concerns under a Trump administration.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

"It was really powerful and heartfelt and people were there crying and more than a few students were thanking us for giving them the opportunity to speak," Martinez said, describing the mood at the rally. "I think there's a lot of untapped potential in terms of students becoming organizers and finding their political voices."

PSC members city-wide have said that the campus organizing

has been one encouraging sign in a seemingly bleak political moment.

"As discouraging as Trump's victory has been, it has been amazing to watch the spontaneous resistance in the Kingsborough community it has produced as students, faculty, staff and alumni emerge from the shadows and come together in a remarkable display of civic engagement and participatory democracy," wrote Dominic Wetzel in an email to *Clarion*. Wetzel teaches in the behavioral sciences and human sciences department at Kingsborough Community College. "I'm still amazed by the budding student activists who gathered over a thousand signatures in a few days, working the student body as only students can – canvassing the cafeteria and breezeway – gathering 350 signatures in one day alone."

He continued, "In my four years at Kingsborough, I've never seen anything that has evoked this kind of spontaneous, emotional and political response. It's a good sign. The delivery of over 1,400 signatures to Kingsborough President [Farley Herzek] on December 7 was an in-

tense and emotional experience, as over 150 students, faculty, staff and alumni packed a security-heavy cafeteria staff/faculty lounge pleading and demanding the president use all the weapons in his power to protect the most vulnerable among us."

LOTS OF PROTESTS

Pro-sanctuary campus protests have taken place at several other campuses, including a December 12 demonstration at John Jay College where students and PSC members formed a human chain around the main building, and a December 8 march from the Graduate Center to CUNY Central offices where several students discussed the idea with CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken.

"I've really never seen so much organizing on campus," said New York City College of Technology assistant professor of health and human services Mery Diaz. "Our human services students were trying to figure out what could be done, so I have been participating in different demonstrations, just trying not to normalize the [anti-immigrant] rhetoric."

Since Election Day, several college administrations made promises that it would keep immigrants



Students marched to demand a 'sanctuary campus' outside CUNY's central administration office in Midtown Manhattan.

safe on campus. Governor Andrew Cuomo sent out a statement that specifically defined the state's intention to defend immigrants, and CUNY campus presidents signed onto sanctuary campus support documents.

In a letter dated December 2 to Chancellor James B. Milliken and the CUNY Board of Trustees Chairperson William C. Thompson, PSC President Barbara Bowen called for other measures, including having the administration condemn acts of bigotry on campus, forbid CUNY security officers from working with federal immigration agents, pledge to prevent unlawful surveillance and provide more resources for immigrants on campus.

"The PSC may call on you to deepen the meaning of 'sanctuary' and, if necessary, to take stronger measures to protect students, staff and faculty," she said. "There is no time to waste. The actions you take now will define what CUNY stands for at this time and for many years to come."

In response, Milliken, on December 14, put forth the following several-point University-wide policy in response to mounting pressure from students and faculty:

- "CUNY will take no action to assist in the enforcement of the immigration laws except as required by law."
- "CUNY will protect student record information in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act."
- "CUNY will not turn over student information to immigration enforcement authorities except pursuant to court order."
- "CUNY will not request or gather information about students' citizenship or immigration status in the course of providing educational or other services or in connection with public safety activities except as required in connection with tuition or financial aid eligibility."
- "CUNY will not permit immigration enforcement officials to enter its campuses except to the extent required by a warrant or court order."
- "CUNY will work with city, state and federal leaders in support of immigration reforms that maximize, not diminish, educational opportunities for all students."

Political leaders from around the city praised Milliken's statement, however, many PSC members believed much more needs to be done in the coming weeks and months.

"I think it needs to go much farther," Bishop said. "There's stop-and-frisk, there's harassment, there's discrimination. Yes, we need to concentrate on the undocumented, but we have all these other issues too. It's great to make a public statement, but what will you actually do? I'm not sure. We need a dialogue, we need a strategy, we need more conversation."

Shomial Ahmad also contributed to this report.

HEOs mobilize for salary boost

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The PSC contract with CUNY ratified last summer has a big new benefit for certain higher education officers – a \$2,500 salary differential. Now, scores of members are organizing to ensure that this feature becomes a reality.

HEOs from several campuses are learning the nuts and bolts of implementing a contract, and in turn, stepping up their own involvement with the union. PSC HEO Chapter Chair Andrea Vásquez has helped train more than 80 chapter members who will serve on new HEO labor-management committees at their respective campuses. These HEOs are learning about the new provisions and devising ways to assist HEOs applying for the differential. (The application for the salary differential can be found at tinyurl.com/salary-differential-app.)

ESTABLISHING COMMITTEES

“We know what the gain is,” Vásquez told *Clarion*. “But in order for members to get it, we have to do a lot of work, to establish these committees and help them function effectively.”

HEO Associates, HEO Assistants and Assistant to HEOs at the top of the salary schedule for at least a year can apply for a \$2,500 salary differential, which, as stated in the

A win from the new contract



HEOs discussing contract implementation at a meeting at Borough of Manhattan Community College.

PSC-CUNY MOA recognizes “excellence in performance or increased responsibilities within the title.” The HEO labor-management committees currently being formed at campuses will have an initial say on whether an application for the \$2,500 salary differential goes forward. (For a chart that outlines the steps in deciding salary differentials, go to tinyurl.com/HEO-salary-differential.) While the contract outlines the formation

of these committees, the logistics are being worked out by individual campus committees.

Taahira Maynard, a student affairs manager at Hunter College, will be one of the three union representatives on the committee at her college. Maynard has attended a union training with the other PSC members and, she said, one of the goals for the committee is to streamline a process so applying doesn’t seem daunting.

“It’s important to help where you can to keep people informed so they know there are new provisions that they can benefit from,” Maynard said.

Maynard and the other union members on the committee have come up with ideas that will make the application process simpler, including setting two deadlines for the Spring semester and determining a time line for when initial decisions will be made. These ideas still need to be decided upon once the full committee meets with the three designees from management.

Peter Santiago, one of the PSC members on the Kingsborough Community College HEO Labor Management Committee, wants his colleagues to be more aware of what the union does for them and how they can become more active.

“Whenever I’m in contact with members, I think that we need to have a bigger conversation,” Santiago said, noting that regular union meetings help members identify issues that need to be addressed. “We want to bring HEOs together.”

GETTING INFORMATION

One of the goals of his committee, Santiago said, is to be accessible to members so that it can answer any questions that members may have on the application. The PSC also recommends that people who

qualify for these provisions email the union at HEOadvisor@psemail.org so a union representative can review their application before it’s submitted.

‘We have to do a lot of work.’

As a result of discussions in bargaining, the criteria for applying for reclassification were expanded, allowing certain long-serving HEOs to apply if the volume of work has significantly increased in a way that has transformed the scope of the job. A reorganization of duties and increased responsibilities are also criteria that can be used to support a change in job title. (For a chart on how the process works, go to tinyurl.com/HEO-reclassification.)

Cindy Bink, the director of counseling at New York City College of Technology, advises HEOs who are applying for the provisions. She tells them to assemble their documents supporting their case and to write a draft justification memo that union colleagues can review. While Bink and PSC members at other campuses have been informing members of the new provisions, Bink says college human resource departments also must step up. “They really need to do more training on this because they leave it up to the union to tell people about [these provisions],” Bink said. “It shouldn’t be the responsibility of the union; it should be the college.”

Union: building decay hurts education

By ARI PAUL

“You don’t matter.”

That’s the message that dilapidated buildings, cracked floors and leaky pipes at CUNY send to a student, PSC President Barbara Bowen told the City Council’s higher education committee January 12. In a panel with PSC members, Bowen argued that the decay of buildings and delays in much needed repairs spoke to the systematic underfunding of the University. “That shows up most dramatically in the physical plant,” she said.

REAL RISKS

PSC members had a united message for the council. Physical decay wasn’t merely unsightly or unpleasant. It posed safety and health risks to faculty, staff and students, and in many cases, directly interfered with learning. In some cases, it dissuades quality educators from coming to CUNY or encourages educators to move to other institutions.

“Regularly, some offices report temperatures above 90 degrees.... Other offices are so cold employees wear coats and hats,” said City Tech-based HEO delegate Cindy Bink in her testimony, speaking of persistent heat and air conditioning system problems. “Sporadic and ongoing pipe bursting and water

Cite safety concerns on CUNY campuses



HEO delegate Cindy Bink, second from left, holds up a photo of disrepair at City Tech. With her, from left, are PSC President Barbara Bowen, Brooklyn College PSC Chair James Davis and Lehman College PSC Chapter Chair Robert Farrell.

damage are a major concern. Some employees place garbage bags over their desks at night because flooding has often damaged student documents. Employees worry about breathing in mold spores because their offices have been flooded so often. A foul stench on a lower level floor reoccurs every time it rains. In one office, a plastic ceiling tile was designed to collect brown water from a permanent leak that could not be repaired,” testified Bink.

‘Students feel the message being sent.’

Lehman College PSC Chapter Chair Robert Farrell painted a similarly dismal picture: “Walls which were patched prior to President Barack Obama’s visit to Lehman last year are now bubbling again with water damage. The ceiling of our recital hall is snowing down in a fine dust onto its floor. Leaks are common.... A busted water pipe caused a power main to explode, resulting in a multi-building blackout for several days. Emergency funding has had to be secured to address the problem.”

City College biologist Christine Li, who has also served as the chair of the College of Liberal Arts and Science Faculty Council, reported that department chairs complained to her about peeling paint, mold and vermin, as well as other major problems. “Waiting seven minutes for an elevator was the norm, not the exception, making it difficult for students, and in particular, disabled students to make it to classes on time,” she said.

Members have reported rats on campus as well and, in some cas-

es, water leaks have led to severe disruption in learning. Brooklyn College PSC Chapter Chair James Davis testified that a math professor told him that a water leak irreparably damaged some of his vital equipment and that the campus television studio was off limits because water leakage there posed an electrocution risk.

GROWING PROBLEM

CUNY administration officials testified that campuses have grown significantly in recent decades, making it more difficult for repairs to keep up with the rate of growth, and that for many campuses, especially those in Manhattan, spatial deficits make it difficult to erect new campus buildings.

Davis noted that administration officials have been responsive to faculty and student concerns. A social media campaign documenting disrepair at Brooklyn College using the hashtag #brokelyncollege which *Clarion* reported on in the fall, pushed the administration to address some issues, Davis said.

But as many members noted, even if campus administrators want to make repairs, they often lack the necessary funds, leaving problems to remain.

“Students feel the message being sent,” Davis said.

BCC members organize against wage gap

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

PSC members at the Bronx Community College chapter have long suspected their faculty salaries were low, but they just couldn't prove it. In 2015, members took it upon themselves to look into the matter and found that average salaries for assistant professors at the college were more than \$4,800 below the average salary of their colleagues with the same title at CUNY's other community colleges, according to CUNY-first salary data from 2011 to 2015.

Armed with that information, PSC activists took action and organized around what they saw as an equity issue – and they won.

DOING THE HOMEWORK

At a November 29 labor-management meeting, Bronx Community College President Thomas Isekenege announced that one of the chapter's proposals – a two-step increase when

Won two-step jumps

a faculty member is promoted from assistant professor to associate professor – was approved.

"I think we were able to persuade the president on this because we did our homework, came armed with data going back five years, and were very persistent for five labor-management meetings spanning over a year," said Peter Kolozi, a PSC delegate who spearheaded the effort. "[We] used the issue, the data and the presentation as an organizing tool to activate, mobilize and attract new members to the chapter."

Before the announcement of the two-step increase, an assistant professor who was promoted to associate professor at the college was eligible to receive only a one-step increase. The additional salary step, which is near \$3,000, aims to reduce the pay gap

between BCC faculty and their colleagues at other CUNY community colleges. Isekenege said the policy change was already retroactively applied for promotions in Spring 2016 and will be effective for Spring 2017, according to the minutes from the November 29 labor-management meeting. Low salaries have been a long-standing issue at the college, and the PSC chapter

organized successfully around the issue more than 10 years ago, ultimately getting the administration to raise starting salaries and grant salary steps at promotion instead of lateral movements, according to Andrew McInerney, a past member of the chapter's executive committee. But those remedies were not enough.

In the five years of salary data (from 2011 to 2015) that Kolozi ana-

lyzed and presented to the administration, BCC ranked last in average salaries for assistant professors for all of the years, except 2012, in which Kingsborough Community College ranked last. But ultimately, BCC was at the bottom of the pack with an average salary near \$59,700 for the five years of salary data, compared to an average salary at other CUNY community colleges around \$64,500.

Marianne Pita, the PSC grievance counselor at Bronx Community College, said the two-step solution is an effort to pay "catch up" and that the root of the problem is BCC's low starting salary.

"Salary is a very big issue here," said Pita, a 20-year veteran of the English department. "We have been over and over at the bottom in terms of ranks."

She told administration officials at the labor-management meeting how low salaries make it difficult to recruit full-time black and Latino faculty, and urged that something must be done to adjust the starting salaries at the college.

LOW MORALE

For faculty already working at the college, low salaries mean low morale, Kolozi said. Fifty percent of faculty surveyed found BCC's salary and fringe benefits unsatisfactory, and more than a quarter of faculty surveyed marked compensation as one of the two worst aspects of working at the college, according to recent faculty satisfaction surveys. Kolozi and other chapter activists organized around the issue. Members presented on this pay issue at chapter meetings,

created a subcommittee, reached out individually to other members, developed a PowerPoint presentation and persistently pressed their case with administration.

EXPECTATIONS

Jawied Nawabi, as an assistant professor who worked on the subcommittee with Kolozi, said their victory didn't happen overnight. They kept bringing up the issue to management, and management kept on saying they were reviewing the issue.

"We thought it was going to be another, 'Let me look at it,'" Nawabi said referring to the late November labor-management meeting. "When you've been turned down so many times, you sort of become cynical. [This win] breaks down that cynicism."

Nawabi said the boost is a step in the right direction, and for junior faculty who are still paying off student loans, the several thousand dollar increase makes a difference. In order to attract and retain talent, salaries must be competitive, said Nawabi. Chapter activists are beginning to look into other issues, including how HEO salaries at the college compare to other community colleges and addressing the root of the salary inequity: low salaries upon hiring. Nawabi said he's happy that the administration provided one remedy to BCC's low salaries.

"It feels like you can get more wins. You get the sigh of relief that if you show facts, people listen," said Nawabi, who has been active with the union since 2014 and plans to continue to organize. "It gives us confidence to look into other matters."



Peter Kolozi, left, and Jawied Nawabi helped lead research and organizing at BCC against pay disparity.

Columbia resists grad union

By ARI PAUL

We don't know who the members of Columbia University administration voted for in November's presidential election. But not only has the Ivy League management embraced some of President Donald Trump's rhetoric in the university's fight against its graduate workers' union, it would benefit from how the new US president will reshape the nation's labor governing body.

The Graduate Workers of Columbia (GWC) union, affiliated with UAW Local 2110, was pivotal in pushing the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) last summer to rule that private-sector university graduate workers were paid workers and therefore eligible for union representation. And in December, the graduate student workforce won its union election 1,602 to 623.

But the administration is fighting the election results and failing to recognize the bargaining unit,

Won't accept election result

filing an official complaint with the NLRB. Some observers believe the legal maneuver is a stalling tactic by the administration, which knows that a Trump administration can reorganize the balance of the NLRB to one that may overturn private-sector graduate workers union rights.

CU CLAIMS VOTING PROBLEMS

"In its objections, Columbia said that during the election, 'known union agents' stood within 100 feet of a polling place – an area voters had to pass through in order to vote – and had conversations with eligible voters," reported *The New York Times*. "Columbia also faulted the regional body of the NLRB, saying a last-minute decision not to require voters to present identification might have allowed ineligible voters to cast ballots. Columbia said

a board representative improperly removed an election observer."

[Trump] can reorganize the...NLRB.

Graduate Center PSC Chapter Chair Luke Elliot-Negri said of the news, "It is appalling to watch the Columbia University administration deploy a strategy that hinges on a Trump presidency and a Trump-appointed NLRB. Their challenge to the recent vote of graduate student workers to unionize in effect kicks the can down the road, so that Trump's undoubtedly horrific appointees will decide the legal fate of this nascent union. The hypocrisy is stunning: on the one hand, the administration has declared Columbia a sanctuary campus in an effort to protect its students from Trump, while on the other it seeks to protect its bottom line by using a Trump presidency to break a union."

New rule for adjuncts on unemployment comp

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

After pressure from academic unions and labor organizations, the US Department of Labor (DOL) issued a long-awaited letter outlining when states should determine adjunct faculty as eligible for unemployment compensation.

The letter spells out the criteria state agencies should use when making unemployment compensation determinations for adjuncts, and specifies requirements for employment offers and definitions of whether "reasonable assurance" or availability of a job were made to an adjunct.

'POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT'

Jon Bloom at the Workers Defense League, a workers' rights organization specializing in unemployment insurance, said the DOL letter is a "positive development," but added that it is unlikely to change the practice in New York state.

"The guidelines that it gives are familiar and are all consistent with what we've seen in actual hearings here," Bloom said, who noted the new guidance could provide relief for adjuncts applying for unemployment in other states.

PSC WELCOMES CLARITY

For Susan DiRaimo, the PSC vice president of part-time personnel, the guidance is a welcome step for adjuncts who do not receive pay when not teaching in the summer or between semesters, because any clarity is an improvement. "We argue that adjuncts are comparable to actors and other workers who receive unemployment insurance when they are not working," DiRaimo told *Clarion*.

Maria Maisto, president of New Faculty Majority, an adjunct advocacy group that fought for the change, told the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, that she does not expect the directive to be overturned by a labor department under President Donald Trump.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Trump's assault on labor

By PENNY LEWIS

With the election of Donald Trump as president and Republican majorities in both the House and Senate, we are entering a period of existential crisis for unions and our organized power. The coming months and years are going to call for a spirit of maximum solidarity.

In this short piece I describe the likely form and substance of the attacks. Here I'm limiting my discussion to issues that most directly implicate unions, though there's plenty more for workers to fear from the incoming administration – including increasing privatization and broad-brush deregulation, as well as efforts to pit workers against one another by fanning the flames of racism, sexism and hostility toward immigrants.

PRIVATE SECTOR 'RIGHT TO WORK'

The Republican Party platform supports state right-to-work laws and calls for a national version.

"Right to work" means "right to work without a union." In the 27 states that have enacted these laws thus far, unions have no right to collect representation fees from non-members for whom they bargain contracts.

We should expect that Congress will attempt to amend the National Labor Relations Act to enact nationwide right to work in the private sector. Even if this is resisted in the Senate or proactively rebutted by individual states, more states are likely to pass right-to-work laws.

PUBLIC SECTOR 'RIGHT TO WORK'

Meanwhile, it is nearly certain that the entire public sector will become right to work within 18 months to two years.

Last spring the Supreme Court was poised to strike down *Abood*, which grants public-sector unions the right to collect "agency" fees. With the death of Justice Antonin Scalia, unions were granted a temporary reprieve, but copycat cases are queuing up now.

The exact time frame will depend on how fast a new Supreme Court justice is approved and the speed with which the court decides to hear a *Friedrichs*-like case – but its success is all but assured, as a new justice will restore the conservative majority on the court.

SHRINKING UNION BUDGETS

Right-to-work is a financial hit to unions. The risk is that members will stop paying dues and become "free riders," gaining the benefits of representation without paying for them.

That said, it's not a death knell. Nevada, a right-to-work state, has maintained relatively impressive union density (around 14 percent) and its unions exercise robust electoral clout. Unprepared unions will be hurt in the short run, and for some the wounds might prove fatal – but there are paths to vibrant labor militancy.

All unions should be organizing now to keep their members. But even for the most successful, right-to-work will mean decisions about what to do with less money. Do you circle the wagons to protect the members? Give up on new organizing? Pull back on movement work – or double down?

What kinds of resources do you put into policy and political candidates? What about



Penny Lewis joined other PSC speakers at a rally protesting the nomination of Betsy DeVos as the US secretary of education.

collecting the member donations that pay for political work? Unions typically contribute to Democrats and help to lead local, statewide and national get-out-the-vote efforts. What will that look like after right to work? These are the internal decisions unions will face.

WEAKER AT THE TABLE

Weaker unions also mean weaker workers in the coming rounds of contract negotiations.

Despite economic recovery, average wage increases in union contracts in recent years have hovered near the inflation rate. Two- and three-tier wage systems continue to be introduced, workers are paying more for their health coverage, and pensions have grown much weaker for new employees.

These trends could intensify. In particular, public-sector unions have disproportionately lifted the living standards of African-Americans and women, so we will see racial and gendered impacts in wages, pensions and health.

Workers in right-to-work states are significantly less likely to have employer-sponsored pensions or health care. With the promised gutting of the Affordable Care Act and possible cuts to Social Security, right-to-work promises an even greater crisis in health and retirement across the country.

ATTACKS ON FEDERAL WORKERS

Federal unions will also come under direct attack. A long-standing Republican Party goal is to erode or eliminate civil service job protections and security. The party also wants to cut salaries and pensions.

The House already voted to reinstate a rule allowing it to target individual federal employees for firing or pay cuts – to as low as \$1 a year!

Overturning the Davis-Bacon Act, which establishes prevailing-wage rules for federal construction projects, will also be high on their list. Republicans are likely to hinge their support for federal infrastructure spending on repealing Davis-Bacon.

Obama's executive orders for federal contractors will also likely be overturned, including the \$10.10 minimum wage, paid sick

leave and the mandatory disclosure of labor law violations.

HOSTILE LABOR SECRETARY

In Trump's cabinet, it seems most nominees are being sent in with missions to destroy the departments they will lead.

The Labor Department, for example, is in charge of enforcing federal labor laws, such as the minimum wage and overtime. But Labor Secretary nominee Andrew Puzder is CEO of the fast-food conglomerate CKE Restaurants. His Carl's Jr. and Hardee's franchises have been found to be in consistent violation of wage and hour laws.

Puzder has questioned minimum wage increases – most emphatically the \$15 rate in his home state of California – and criticized labor laws such as mandatory breaks for workers.

SCHOOL PRIVATIZATION PUSH

At the Education Department, the promotion of billionaire public education opponent Betsy DeVos to Education Secretary would likely mean linking federal school funding to "school choice" efforts including vouchers and charters, two largely non-union sectors.

DeVos's radical free-market approach to education has already failed in Michigan, where the poor-performing charter system she promoted with her fortune is one of the least regulated in the country.

LABOR BOARD REVERSALS

Trump's appointments to the National Labor Relations Board also will certainly undo the progress made in recent years.

In jeopardy are rulings that established corporations like McDonald's as joint employers of the workers at their franchises (which might have opened up a route for unionization there) and granted private-sector graduate students the right to organize.

So is the rule that enabled faster union elections.

Overall, a dire situation. In the struggles to come, I hope a better movement will be born. But we should be prepared for a marathon of a fight.

Penny Lewis teaches labor studies at the Murphy Institute. This article originally appeared in Labor Notes.

International conference: resistance now

The PSC is hosting a conference called, "Global Resistance in the Neoliberal University," organized by the union's International Committee, taking place on Friday, March 3, from 6:00 to 9:00 pm, and on Saturday, March 4, starting at 9:00 am and lasting until 7:30 pm, at the union hall at 61 Broadway in Manhattan.

The theme of the conference is "overcoming austerity, adjunctification, racism, sexism, militarization and repression." Speakers include Trevor Ngwane, Mayen Arellanes, Vivek Chibber, Mosibudi Motimele and Maria Teresa Lechuga.

"The International Conference is the most significant initiative by any union in the US to build direct, peer-to-peer solidarity with worker organizations and students in India, South Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and beyond," said committee chair Immanuel Ness of Brooklyn College. "Through sharing common experiences we will learn the most effective techniques in resisting state and corporate initiatives to undermine the rights of academics and students through casualization, creation of two-tier labor forces and withdrawal of state funding."

Cuomo tuition plan

Continued from page 3

erage more than \$1,000. Northeast Director for the Young Invincibles Kevin Stump wrote in *Gotham Gazette* that the proposal is mainly "backfilling aid after state and federal grants, and therefore the program does not help low-income students who already have the full costs of their tuition covered by Pell and TAP but struggle to afford other expenses associated with earning a degree, such as books, childcare, housing, transportation and more."

As Assemblyman Skoufis noted, his competing bill would cover some non-tuition expenses. "My approach is a little bit pricier as a result, but I think it's more progressive," he said.

LOOK AT TAX BREAKS

Noting these points, Robert Samuels, author of *Why Public Higher Education Should Be Free* wrote in *Inside Higher Ed*, "The plan also does not deal with huge federal and state tax breaks related to higher education that often go to the wealthiest families. In fact, New York State already spends over \$240 million a year on tax credits and deductions for tuition, and more money is sheltered from taxes through the use of 529 College Savings Plans."

In addition, since the scholarship would only apply for full-time students, this wouldn't help a low-wage worker seeking a degree but without the financial resources to attend school full time. Like TAP's failure to provide assistance to part-time students this provision is deeply regressive: an 18-year-old Bronx Science graduate from a low six-figure home would could get a tuition-free full-time admittance, whereas a middle-aged worker with a high school diploma looking for economic advancement gets no aid to take advantage of what is, in essence, a public resource.

As University Student Senate Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs Hercules Reid said in a statement, "We need a plan that takes all New Yorkers into consideration."

'[A] period of existential crisis.'



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

March against climate change

The Trump administration has shown no interest in fighting climate change. President Donald Trump ordered a media blackout for Environmental Protection Agency employees and has redoubled his commitment to using fossil fuels. The new White House website has been scrubbed of any mention of efforts to combat climate change.

The environmental group 350.org is planning a major march on Washington, DC called the People's Climate Mobilization.

Mark your calendar, and even if you cannot attend the march yourself, you can spread the word to friends, family and colleagues. More information: <https://350.org/april-29-2017-lets-march/>.

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EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Full funding of CUNY

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

On January 24, at the legislative hearing in Albany on the state budget allocation for higher education in FY2018, the PSC unveiled an ambitious agenda for the full funding of CUNY. President Barbara Bowen, joined by First Vice President Mike Fabricant and Secretary Nivedita Majumdar, called for a four-year plan to reach a \$2 billion increase in the University's annual public support. While public attention has focused largely on Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposal for Excelsior Scholarships, the union argues that real transformation in public higher education in New York requires an end to defensive budget battles and a commitment to full funding. "The root problem at CUNY is underfunding," Bowen commented. "The union's next big campaign will make it clear that full funding is possible – and urgent." In the adapted version of her testimony below, the PSC lays out a vision worth fighting for. (Full testimony is available at the union's website.)

Full funding of CUNY – the opportunity is now

The PSC calls on the Legislature to build on the substantial work you did on higher education last year and embark on a four-year plan to reach full funding of CUNY. Higher education has never been as prominent a national issue as it is this year; this is the year for New York to turn the pattern of underfunding around.

Governor Cuomo was right when he focused on the importance of a college education as a central issue of our times. The idea of free college tuition caught fire during the presidential election as a way to address economic inequality. As the economy changes and relies more on jobs requiring higher degrees, a college education becomes increasingly essential for an opportunity to attain a financially secure life. College alone will not end income inequality – that requires larger structural change – but in a society defined by inequality and downward mobility, college education offers the surest hope of a good life.

Governor Cuomo's Excelsior Scholarship proposal elevates the idea of free college tuition, reaffirms the value of CUNY and SUNY, and suggests that free public col-



ElWise Noisette/NYSUT

PSC President Barbara Bowen delivered testimony to a joint legislative panel regarding the governor's executive budget. She laid out a plan to fully fund CUNY.

lege is a realistic goal. That in itself is a breakthrough. But the promise must be real.

The PSC strongly supports the goal of free tuition at public colleges and has long argued that New York State can afford to make CUNY free, as it was for more than a century. The Excelsior Scholarship program, however, does not reach that goal – and it raises other concerns. Yet the proposal has opened an urgent conversation, in which the Legislature can define New York as the national leader on higher education. Higher education support has ignited the popular imagination; the moment to act is now.

Full funding is achievable

Full funding for CUNY, by our estimate, and as documented in the white paper issued by CUNY Rising – an alliance of student, community and labor groups – would require a \$2 billion increase in annual public invest-

ment. Obviously that is a large number, but it is achievable within a multiyear framework. And its impact would be extraordinary.

New York State has the highest rate of income inequality in the nation (Fiscal Policy Institute, June 2016), inequality that is always racialized and gendered. CUNY directly addresses racial and economic injustice. A recent major report tracking every US college student from 1999 to 2013 found that CUNY propelled almost six times as many low-income students into the middle class and beyond as all eight Ivy League colleges plus Duke, M.I.T., Stanford and Chicago, combined.

CUNY's powerhouse role in economic mobility is threatened by years of austerity funding and ever-increasing tuition costs for students.

Funding needed this year

The Legislature can seize this moment to act. The PSC calls on you to make a commitment to reaching full funding for CUNY, starting with the first year of a four-year plan in FY2018. Highlights of our request are:

\$80 million to hire an additional 1,000 full-time faculty

CUNY set a goal of establishing a mix of 70 percent of courses taught by full-time faculty and 30 percent taught by part-time faculty. (The current mix is 48 percent taught by full-time faculty and 52 percent by part-time faculty.) Reaching that goal would require 4,000 new full-time faculty positions. We propose adding the first 1,000 new full-time faculty this year. The last time CUNY had student enrollment approaching its current level, the University employed 11,500 full-time faculty. Today, the number is closer to 7,700.

Increasing the number of professors and faculty counselors would also provide an opportunity to increase student advising, to move many current part-time faculty with advanced degrees to full-time positions, and to increase the racial, ethnic and gender diversity of the CUNY professoriate.

\$40 million for the first phase of an increase in adjunct wages to \$7,000 per course, in line with national standards

CUNY currently pays adjuncts \$3,500

per course, on average, an amount that means an annual income of less than \$30,000 for the thousands of adjunct faculty who earn their incomes through adjunct teaching. These faculty often teach the University's basic courses and its students most in need of support; they must be paid a living wage. New York sends the wrong message about its commitment to the middle class when it allows college instructors to be paid a poverty wage. The hollowing out of CUNY's budget has created the justification for this vastly underpaid workforce. The solution must be a budgetary solution.

\$35 million to match the request of NYC for faculty initiative to improve student graduation rates through realignment of workload

CUNY's budget request includes a proposal for New York City to provide an additional \$35 million for CUNY senior colleges to "expand and develop initiatives for faculty to provide dedicated and intensive time with students." The PSC supports this request of the city and urges the Legislature to match the investment in CUNY's Faculty Partnership for Student Success Initiative, which includes a reduction in the teaching load for full-time faculty.

\$81.1 million for mandatory cost increases; enact strong maintenance-of-effort legislation

The governor's budget proposal makes the important inclusion of funds for fringe benefits increases. It does not, however, include funding to cover inflation or other mandatory costs, including \$5.6 million needed for building rentals and \$76.2 million needed to cover contractual increases. All of these mandatory costs must be covered; otherwise, the budget amounts to a cut.

Other requests include: an increase in community college base aid of \$250 per full-time equivalent student, passage of the DREAM Act, restoration of funding for opportunity programs and full coverage for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP).

Excelsior Scholarships – promise needs to be real

While the PSC welcomes the governor's interest in making college free for middle-class New Yorkers affordable, we believe that the Excelsior Scholarship proposal falls short of the goal. It raises other concerns about funding, access and unintended consequences. The PSC proposes to the Legislature that the way to create the most profound impact on the future of New York's students and families is to begin this year on a plan for reaching full funding of CUNY – a commitment that would make New York the genuine national leader on college education.

Full funding is achievable