

Clarion

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JULY 2014



ADVOCACY Money for CUNY

PSC members & CUNY students make gains in this year's City budget.

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Dave Sanders

PSC & CUNY NEGOTIATORS

AT THE BARGAINING TABLE

Negotiators for the PSC and CUNY management met on June 20 at the CUNY central office for a formal three-hour bargaining session. Progress toward a new PSC-CUNY agreement has become more possible now that the Bloomberg-era freeze in municipal labor relations has begun to thaw. PSC President Barbara Bowen said she expects CUNY and the

PSC to hold "intense negotiations over the summer." In a message to union members, she said that the PSC bargaining team needs their support and urged members to watch for messages throughout the summer. To receive updates on contract negotiations, sign up at tinyurl.com/ThisWeekPSC.

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CUNY & THE CITY

Preparing new pre-K teachers

Pre-K expansion means 1,000 more preschool teachers are needed this fall. CUNY's schools of education address that need with an accelerated master's program.

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POLITICS

WFP's Cuomo endorsement

In a tumultuous convention, the labor-backed Working Families Party endorsed Gov. Cuomo. PSC members weigh in on the decision.

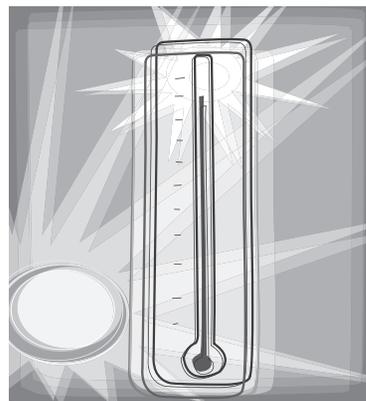
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The overheated classroom

Summer temperatures and too much heat indoors can pose real health risks, like heat exhaustion. Know what to do if your work space is too hot.

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Adjunct health care extended

Current adjunct health coverage will continue through the end of September. By October, union leaders expect a lasting solution for adjunct health care to be in place.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR |

WRITE TO: CLARION/PSC, 61 BROADWAY, 15TH FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY 10006. EMAIL: PHOGNESS@PSCMAIL.ORG. FAX: 212-302-7815.

Response to PSC on NY's new teacher test

● The May *Clarion* reported on the PSC's opposition to edTPA, New York's new performance assessment for teacher certification. While the union's resolution was passed by the Delegate Assembly, it does not necessarily reflect the sentiments of all CUNY education faculty.

The article also makes inaccurate claims.

Claim: edTPA outsources evaluation to a private corporation, Pearson. *Fact:* edTPA was developed by hundreds of educators across the country in a process led by Stanford University's Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) with support from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). Pearson is an operational partner (much like the publisher of a text), responsible for creating and managing the assessment's online platform. EdTPA is scored by experienced educators, selected and trained by a rigorous SCALE-designed process.

Claim: edTPA has no research base. *Fact:* edTPA is based on 25 years of research and practice from nationally representative educators and major professional associations.

Claim: edTPA demands a single approach to teaching. *Fact:* edTPA is a frame with room for different approaches that reflects national consensus on foundational teaching practices.

Claim: edTPA fails to consider the diverse communities teacher education programs serve. *Fact:* edTPA asks teachers to demonstrate they understand and are responsive to students' cultural, linguistic and learning backgrounds.

Claim: edTPA takes student evaluation out of faculty's hands. *Fact:* edTPA complements faculty input from courses and clinical experi-

ences, prompting faculty to develop more program coherence.

Because edTPA asks new teachers to demonstrate they are ready to teach before assuming responsibility for children's lives, many believe it strengthens teaching and the profession.

Beverly Falk
City College

Three CUNY education faculty members – David Gerwin (Queens College), Ruth Powers Silverberg (College of Staten Island) and Peter Taubman (Brooklyn College) – respond:

Professor Falk's suggestion that the PSC is out of step with teacher educators is inaccurate. The PSC resolution on edTPA represents the views of hundreds of teacher educators in CUNY and across New York. New York State United Teachers and SUNY's United University Professions also adopted the substance of the PSC resolution. Falk personally presented her views to the PSC Delegate Assembly before it voted, but gained few adherents. The rest of Professor Falk's arguments are drawn from talking points published by SCALE and present a skewed picture of edTPA.

Pearson is not simply an "operational partner." Pearson recruits, hires, and pays the scorers for the assessment. Pearson profits, charging students \$300 for the exam, \$200 for a review, and \$100 to retake a section. Teacher candidates must transfer copyright on their work to Pearson.

Our colleagues across New York City have found that edTPA's implementation creates two tiers of education schools: those that can afford to hire videographers and demand student-teaching place-

ments that look good on video, and those programs whose students borrow a camera or use an iPhone. In addition, the high-stakes nature of this single assessment narrows the focus of teacher preparation to rubrics designed elsewhere. All of this is occurring with an absence of solid evidence that edTPA has predictive validity for new-teacher performance, a point Falk obscures with her claim of years of research.

An educator who supports edTPA is free to use it as a final gate for his or her teacher candidates. But edTPA is a model without established predictive validity, and no one should force it on others through state certification. The mandatory implementation of edTPA seems the very antithesis of academic freedom, professional authority, scholarly collaboration, and the commitment to public education that we cherish and that we wish to instill in our teachers.

Bargaining on adjunct pay

● An across-the-board percentage increase for all faculty does not move adjunct faculty toward financial equity with full-time faculty. In absolute terms it actually widens the gap. I hope our negotiating team remembers the PSC's stated goal of significant movement toward equity for adjunct faculty when they sit across the table from management. We need a significant amount added to our pay for each course, along with an across-the-board percentage increase for any real movement toward equity to be realized.

To illustrate the inequity of across-the-board increases, I made this back-of-the-envelope calculation. I usually teach six courses

per year. As an adjunct lecturer at the top step, my annual pay before taxes is \$24,210. This is my primary source of income and has been for many years. For me, a 3% increase would raise my salary by \$726, so I would earn \$24,936. Many adjuncts are not able to get three courses each semester, and more typically earn much less than \$20,000 – for them it is much worse!

That same 3% increase for a full-time assistant professor earning \$75,000 would be \$2,250, making the new salary \$77,250. The absolute gap would have widened from \$50,790 to \$52,314. Would anyone call this movement toward equity?

Arlene Geiger
John Jay College

PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant responds: *As a member of the PSC negotiating team, I want to acknowledge Arlene Geiger's rightful frustration with the two-tiered labor system at CUNY and across the nation. This system has constrained the lives of many part-time faculty who have been working for too little for far too long.*

For the past 14 years the union has worked to address issues of inequity for part-time faculty and other parts of the bargaining unit. We successfully negotiated an office hour for part-time faculty – a pay increase of as much as 17% for adjuncts teaching six hours or more. In the last contract, the union secured a substantial bump of over 13% to the top salary step for part-time faculty lecturers. The PSC leadership also allocated millions of dollars from the 2002-2007 contract settlement to preserve health insurance coverage for part-time faculty. To a significant extent, that meant redistributing dollars from full-time members to eligible part-time faculty. These actions and many others have been part of an explicit goal of the PSC bargaining team to target additional dollars to lower-paid

parts of the bargaining unit, which also include groups such as assistants to HEO and junior faculty, to address historic inequities.

That said, these real gains for part-time faculty have certainly not fixed the labor tear that runs right across the fabric of CUNY, and much more must be done. Inequity for contingent faculty sits on a three-legged stool: job insecurity, unstable health care and low pay. We are making progress toward a more stable form of health care for part-time faculty. An advance in job security for contingent faculty is a priority for the bargaining team in this round. Regarding pay parity, I would dispute parts of Ms. Geiger's analysis while agreeing that more needs to be done. Our shared struggle is to oppose the austerity that marks the current negotiating landscape and work for the gains that every part of our bargaining unit deserves

Contingent coverage

● I recently visited the PSC office (to see Marcia Newfield, VP for Part-time Personnel) and picked up a copy of the May *Clarion*. A wonderful publication! I was particularly interested in Janine Jackson's article, which is the best analysis of the recent news coverage of contingent faculty issues that I have seen.

I am sending her article out to a contingent activists' (and allies) news aggregator that I produce, COCAL Updates, for the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor. This sort of good work deserves to be widely read in the movement.

Thanks for publishing it and thanks to Janine Jackson for writing it.

Joe Berry
Editor, COCAL Updates

Editor's note: To subscribe to COCAL Updates, email joeberry@igc.org.

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Mastering the study of labor



Some of this year's graduates of the master's degree program in labor studies at CUNY's Joseph S. Murphy Institute, where graduation ceremonies were held on June 3. From left: Orit Shmulevich, Thisanjali Gangoda, Lydia Edmunds, Eric Kaufman, Irene Garcia-Mathes (the program's academic advisor), Stephen Cheng (partial view), Han Chun Xin, Pamela Galpern, Jameelah Muhammad and Jonathan Beatrice.

Adjunct health care extended

By CLARION STAFF

The current adjunct health coverage through the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund has been extended through September 30, 2014. In a June 20 message to program participants, PSC President Barbara Bowen reported that "we are within reach of achieving stable, ongoing health insurance for eligible adjuncts for an unlimited period after that."

AGREEMENT CLOSE

"During the past few weeks the union has made substantial progress toward an agreement on a lasting solution for adjunct health insurance," Bowen wrote.

"University management has fully supported our efforts and has agreed to provide additional funding for the next three months. The three-month extension of the current coverage is based on the expectation that we will be able to sign an agreement for the provision of sustained, regularized adjunct health insurance starting October 1, 2014."

Current eligibility requirements remain in effect, so adjuncts who received health insurance in the Spring 2014 semester but not in Fall 2013 are covered through July 31 only. Adjuncts who received health coverage in both Fall and Spring semesters of the 2013-2014 academic year will be covered through August.

Bargaining on a new contract

By PETER HOGNESS

Negotiators for the PSC and CUNY management met on June 20 at the CUNY central office for a formal three-hour bargaining session. PSC President Barbara Bowen said she expects to see “intense negotiations over the summer.”

At the June 20 session, the two sides exchanged demands and discussed each side’s priorities for a new collective bargaining agreement. Speaking for the PSC bargaining team, Bowen presented the PSC’s demands, an updated version of the bargaining agenda approved by the Delegate Assembly in 2010. “Our four priorities,” she told *Clarion*, “are salaries, rebalancing the full-time faculty teaching load to allow more time with students and more time with research, measurable progress on equity for adjuncts, and a career advancement system for HEOs.”

BACK TO THE TABLE

At the bargaining table, Bowen emphasized the PSC’s view that there is a particular opportunity in the next few months, with New York City and State both open to settling union contracts, to get the PSC contract done.

While understanding the terms being negotiated with other public-sector unions in New York, she said, the PSC remains determined to press for its members’ demands. The union expressed the urgency of securing an economic offer that allows for salary increases and other needs – especially after years without a contract.

“We have accomplished major structural changes in previous contracts, when some thought such changes would be impossible,” Bowen noted. “We believe it’s possible to achieve similar breakthroughs now.”

Pamela Silverblatt, CUNY’s vice chancellor for labor relations, presented management’s demands, many of which have appeared in previous rounds of bargaining. She expressed a desire to build on the two sides’ record of success in negotiating agreements in recent years (see sidebar). The union bargaining team is analyzing CUNY’s demands and will report on them in more detail shortly.

MEMBER ACTION

Progress toward a new PSC-CUNY agreement has become more possible now that the Bloomberg-era freeze in municipal labor relations has begun to thaw. In his final term, Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s one-sided insistence on union concessions and his refusal to budget for City worker raises led to an unprecedented situation: When he left office, every one of 152 bargaining units was working under an expired contract.

With Mayor Bill de Blasio’s administration in office, “bargaining [is] back in style,” commented the civil-service weekly *The Chief*. While City unions may not get all they want, “meaningful bargaining between the city and its labor

Union expects intense talks thru summer



PSC & CUNY management met on June 20 for a formal bargaining session. Facing camera (left to right) are Iris DeLutro, Steven London, Barbara Bowen, Deborah Bell and Bob Cermele of the PSC bargaining team.

unions” has replaced Bloomberg’s “my-way-or-the-highway approach to wage-contract talks.” Chief editor Richard Steier wrote in March.

That shift led to a May 1 contract settlement with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), ratified with 77% support in a membership vote announced at the beginning of June. Other long-overdue agreements are expected to follow soon.

While the PSC negotiates with CUNY management, not the City of New York, CUNY must get City and State backing for any economic offer to the PSC. That support generally isn’t offered until other public-worker settlements are in place. While the largest State worker contracts were ratified in 2011, the contract for SUNY instructional staff was settled in 2013 and transit workers settled this year. In the current

PSC-CUNY talks, discussions with the City and State are ongoing.

“There’s now real momentum to get contracts settled,” Bowen told the PSC Delegate Assembly on June 19, the night before the bargaining session. “Having had this logjam for three years, the City is now trying to get all its expired contracts concluded very quickly.”

Outlining the PSC’s priorities on salaries, teaching load, part-timer equity and HEO advancement, Bowen told delegates, “I give you a commitment that we will fight as hard as we can for each of them.”

As negotiations between the PSC and CUNY management intensify, she said, PSC members should be ready to take action. “We should not think that what happens in negotiations happens only at the bargaining table,” Bowen emphasized. “It

is membership support that has enabled us to be strong in other rounds of bargaining.” In this round as well, she said, “we will need to call on members to make their voices heard.”

“So expect to be needed this summer,” she concluded. “It’s going to be a fight for us – and we are capable of that.”

BARGAINING UPDATES

Frank Mirer, a union delegate and a professor of environmental and occupational health at Hunter, asked if periodic bulletins on negotiations would be sent to PSC members. “I don’t expect to get every detail,” Mirer said, “but to get some description would be useful.”

Bowen said that bargaining updates would be provided, primarily through the union’s weekly email newsletter, *This Week in the PSC*.

PSC and CUNY reach other agreements

During the Bloomberg-era breakdown in municipal contract negotiations, it was difficult to make progress on an overall contract agreement between CUNY and the PSC. But union and management negotiators were not idle: They were hard at work on a series of other agreements, which have led to important gains in benefits and working conditions for CUNY faculty and professional staff.

Here is a list of the highlights, with links to past *Clarion* coverage that provides more details:

Paid Parental Leave: A pilot program that provided this benefit on a trial basis was made a permanent part of the contract. (See *Clarion*, Dec. 2011, at tinyurl.com/PPL-permanent.)

Phased Retirement: Union and management reached agreement on a three-year pilot program. Eligible full-time faculty who belong to an Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) like TIAA-CREF may choose to

take a phased retirement with full health insurance benefits of one, two or three years at 50% workload and 50% pay. Eligible HEO-series employees and full-time CLTs (who must also belong to TIAA-CREF or another ORP plan) can take a phased retirement with full health insurance benefits for either six months or one year, at 80% of workload and 80% pay. (See *Clarion*, June 2013, at tinyurl.com/phased-ret-pilot.)

City Tech Teaching Load Equity: The teaching load for full-time faculty at City Tech was brought in line with other CUNY senior colleges. The reduction from 24 to 21 hours corrected a longstanding inequity, a victory that was the result of local rank-and-file organizing. (See *Clarion*, Nov. 2013, at tinyurl.com/City-Tech-teaching-load.)

PSC-CUNY Research Awards: A pilot program maintained faculty con-

trol, increased total funding, and added larger grants of up to \$12,000. It was made permanent in 2014. (See *Clarion*, Jan. 2011, at tinyurl.com/expanded-PSC-CUNY-awards.)

Dedicated Sick Leave: A dedicated sick leave policy is now in place: it allows eligible full-time members to donate or receive sick leave in response to special health needs. The

Union and management negotiators were not idle.

Payroll Practices: An agreement affirms that adjunct faculty receive pay for the fifteenth week of the semester at all CUNY campuses. It also includes clarifications to permit full-time faculty who are on payroll for only one semester in an academic year to receive accurate pay and health insurance coverage without breaks.

(To get on the list for these updates, sign up at tinyurl.com/ThisWeek-PSC.) While not everything in contract talks can be discussed in public, she said, it is essential for the bargaining team to keep PSC members informed – and every member should pay attention.

“Watch for messages throughout the summer,” Bowen advised. “Sometimes there are no developments, but sometimes things happen fast.”

TEACHERS & TRANSIT WORKERS

The new UFT contract covers an unusually long period – nine years, from the previous agreement’s expiration in 2009 through 2018. Retroactive pay will be stretched out even longer, with the last payments made in 2020. The retro pay was nonetheless seen by most observers as a major union victory: Bloomberg, newspaper editorial boards and pro-business policy groups had issued dire warnings that back pay for City workers would be “unaffordable.”

A tentative settlement of a new transit workers’ contract was also ratified by a wide margin, winning 82% support in results announced on May 19. The five-year contract provides members of Transport Workers Union Local 100 with 8.25% in raises over the life of the agreement. While it also includes some union concessions, it notably does not include the three years of 0% raises that Governor Andrew Cuomo had imposed on the main State worker unions, an example he had urged the MTA to follow. (For details on the new UFT and TWU Local 100 contracts, see the May issue of *Clarion* at tinyurl.com/Clarion-UFT-TWU-2014.)

“There’s going to be a mass rush for other unions to get in there and resolve their contracts,” Harry Nespoli, chair of the Municipal Labor Committee, told *The Chief*. “What the UFT did with their ratification was open the door for other unions” to reach their own agreements.

Timesheets: No agreement yet, but progress has been made in discussions of union-proposed changes in the new timesheets for HEOs, CLTs and Research Associates/Assistants. (See *Clarion*, April 2014, at tinyurl.com/timesheet-update.)

Adjunct Health Insurance: This agreement gained additional dedicated funds and subsequent supplemental funding that allowed the Welfare Fund to continue coverage through September 30, 2014 (see page 2). Agreements to date between union and management have led to substantial progress toward a lasting solution.

Adjunct-CET Professional Development Fund: \$250,000 was added to the Adjunct-Continuing Education Teacher Professional Development Fund, as part of the 2013 agreement with CUNY for funding of continued adjunct health coverage. (See tinyurl.com/AHI-extension-Adj-PDF.)

Hot at work? Don't sweat it out

By DANIA RAJENDRA

Uncontrolled indoor temperatures are a “tremendous problem,” across CUNY, said Jean Grassman, PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs co-chair and associate professor of Health and Nutrition Sciences at Brooklyn College. Overheated classrooms, labs and other work spaces are common because of the university’s aging infrastructure. The heat can threaten the health of faculty, students and staff, Grassman emphasized, so it’s important to speak up right away.

YEAR-ROUND PROBLEM

“Sometimes people have hot offices and classrooms all winter long, because it’s not just about the weather, it’s about climate control,” Grassman explained. But at any time of year, too-hot spaces pose real risks, including heat exhaustion and potential indoor air-quality concerns.

The most serious risk is heat exhaustion, which can lead to heat stroke. Heat exhaustion is often characterized by heavy sweating,

Take action on summer temps

a racing pulse, dizziness and/or nausea. It’s of particular concern for people with cardiovascular conditions, Grassman said, but can afflict anyone, especially when moving around in a hot environment. “Instructors are generally pretty active in front of the class,” she noted. “Heat exhaustion is something to take seriously.”

Last summer’s long heat wave created problems all over CUNY, Grassman said, and though this summer’s weather has been relatively cool so far, she does expect more difficulties during July and August. Last year, when the air conditioning quit in a trailer where Research Foundation employees at Kingsborough Community College worked, “it was an emergency,” Grassman told *Clarion*. “Those people had to get out of that trailer. Fans would not do it.”

Special problems can result from the combination of hot spaces and chemicals, including those used in cleaning, painting or in science labs. “At Brooklyn College, we just

had a problem with waxing the floors,” Grassman said. The heat makes volatile chemicals more so, and can intensify their effects, which can include dizziness, nausea, headache and even collapse.

“Years ago at Brooklyn College we had un-air-conditioned anatomy labs,” Grassman recalled. “People were having a lot of problems with the fixative for the tissues. The formalin was evaporating because it was so hot. We had some students faint.” While that problem was subsequently fixed, she said, labs without AC may exist at other campuses.

HOW HOT IS TOO HOT?

The industry standard for acceptable indoor temperatures for our high-humidity climate ranges from 72.5 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

If your classroom, lab or office feels too hot, here’s what to do:

Contact the facilities department on your campus: “A lot of campuses say to file a work order, but that’s not enough because it can take a long time,” Grassman said.

What to do if your classroom, lab or office is too hot

“Excessive heat is a safety concern and needs prompt attention.” Talking directly with a responsible administrator is often important to getting the problem solved.

You should also report the problem to your chapter chair or to a member of the PSC Environmental Health and Safety Watchdogs on your campus. (Chapter chairs are listed at tinyurl.com/PSC-chch.)

If that doesn’t get a resolution within two days, contact the PSC Environmental Health and Safety Watchdogs at 212-354-1252 x208, or email hswatchdogs@psemail.org. “Don’t soldier it out,” Grassman said. “Speed is of the essence.” The Watchdogs are experienced at getting action.

Measure the temperature: The PSC Health and Safety Watchdogs

can provide thermometers and temperature logs upon request. (See contact info above.)

Consider moving: “If the temperature is into the 80s, consider moving to a different space,” Grassman said. “That’s something we can help people with.”

AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

Temperature problems across CUNY are mainly due to infrastructure challenges – old buildings and insufficient system upkeep. “Generally, HVAC (heating, ventilation and air-conditioning) systems aren’t well maintained at CUNY,” she said. In older buildings without integrated HVAC systems, colleges depend on individual air conditioners for cooling, which can be unreliable.

Buildings that do have HVAC systems sometimes have over-air-conditioned spaces. “We’ve seen that at John Jay, [where] they can overdo it and it will get pretty frosty,” Grassman told *Clarion*.

Sometimes, especially in spaces with HVAC systems, fixing the problem can mean something as quick as “a small adjustment.” In cases where the root of the problem is more systemic, the Health and Safety Watchdogs can help members and chapter leaders organize to secure a lasting solution, while also insisting on immediate relief.

CUNY prepares new pre-K teachers

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

Five CUNY campuses are playing a central role in preparing new pre-K teachers for New York City, helping meet the surging demand as the City expands its full-day pre-K programs toward universal coverage.

Sherry Cleary, director of CUNY’s Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, says the institute has been working with CUNY faculty for the last several months on a recruitment, teaching and support program offering intensive pre-K teacher education.

“You’re taking on a lot when you agree to be a pre-K teacher. Four-year-olds are still very young, their families are very young,” Cleary told *Clarion*. “You’re a teacher, you’re a social worker, you’re kind of a medical professional.”

This September, about 1,000 new teachers are needed to meet the City’s initial goal of offering full-day pre-K to 53,000 of the city’s four-year-olds. More than a third of them will be educated through the new programs at CUNY. A total of 2,000 new pre-K teachers will be needed by September 2015.

ACCELERATED PROGRAM

Cleary has been on the mayor’s pre-K working group since December. With \$300 million in State funding secured this spring, they moved fast to create two new tracks for pre-K teacher education. One track offers a fully subsidized 14-month master’s program at the five CUNY campuses with graduate programs

1,000 more needed this fall



Lindsay Portnoy (far right) is part of a CUNY effort to educate new pre-K teachers.

in early childhood education: Brooklyn College, City College, Hunter, Lehman and Queens. Classes began this summer and 120 students are currently enrolled in the new program across the five campuses.

Now that the program is up and running, Cleary says the focus is on the teacher candidates themselves. “Our attention [has now turned] to helping them manage all the stress and demands on their time and brains,” she explained.

This summer, students in the master’s program are taking at least 12 credit-hours of course work

and have four to six weeks of field experience at a community-based organization. Come September, they will teach in a pre-K classroom at a community-based organization, while taking further classes two or three evenings a week. The following summer, students will finish their remaining coursework and student-teach in kindergarten through second grade classrooms.

A second track is designed for those who are already working toward certification for teaching early childhood through grade two. It aims to help students get

certified more quickly, by offering additional support. Students devise a study plan, access career advisers and may take classes at one of the five CUNY colleges. This track is also subsidized and applications are being accepted until available slots are filled.

Through a \$6.7 million partnership between the City and CUNY, up to 400 professionals will be certified by September 2015, according to the mayor’s office.

This summer, 36 students are taking classes in Hunter College’s master’s program in early childhood education. Associate Professor Christina Taharally, who coordinates pre-K teacher education at Hunter, says the students in the new program take the same coursework for their master’s degree as others, but at an accelerated pace. This summer they’re taking classes on early childhood curriculum, language and learning, and they’re learning how to encourage a sense of discovery in the classroom.

“If we think of the four-year-old’s favorite question, it’s ‘Why? Why is there thunder? Why does this happen that way?’” Taharally told *Clarion*. The teacher candidates at Hunter “are learning about the child’s development, and they’re learning about what are good teaching methods, curriculum and practices for four-year-olds.”

Assistant Professor Lindsay Portnoy is teaching early childhood development at Hunter this summer. “I don’t think these children should be

sitting with workbooks. The teachers can engage the whole child,” Portnoy told *Clarion*. Pre-K teachers, she said, “can make sure that [children are] engaged physically and honing their growth and motor skills. They’re jumping and running.”

In her class, she takes theoretical concepts and translates them to classroom activities. A child can learn how to count by using one-to-one correspondence, by seeing the number ‘1’ and placing one Cheerio on a plate. A group activity or help from a teacher can lead a child to a higher level of understanding.

FOCUS ON THE WHOLE CHILD

“[We’re] not just pushing didactic teaching, but looking to create a rich, experiential, play-based experience appropriate for four-year olds,” City College Professor Beverly Falk told *Clarion*.

Falk directs the graduate program in early childhood education at City College. She says an essential part of the pre-K

New support for early childhood education is welcomed.

education program is also providing support to the teachers once they’re outside of their graduate classes and inside the pre-K classroom. Campus liaisons check up on teachers when they’re teaching during the school year. Once the pre-K scholars graduate, the program continues to provide support for things like additional coaching or exploring bilingual training.

At Hunter College, Portnoy says, the new attention and support for early childhood education is overdue.

“I think that this is a really critical moment in education, where we’re finally acknowledging the importance of education for the youngest of our students,” Portnoy said.

City increases CUNY funding

By PETER HOGNESS & SHOMIAL AHMAD

Money for STEM & merit aid

In a sign of the sea change in New York City politics since the end of the Bloomberg era, this year's discussion on City funding for CUNY was not about whether to cut – it was about how much to add.

A handshake deal on the final budget was announced on June 19 by Mayor Bill de Blasio and City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and it included a significant boost in support for CUNY.

The spending plan includes an additional \$19 million proposed by the mayor for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs at CUNY community colleges, an expansion that will add about 60 full-time lines. Also included was a council initiative adding around \$11 million to fund merit-based CUNY scholarships, similar to the former Vallone Scholarships that were axed by Bloomberg. An additional \$1 million to support CUNY's Citizenship NOW! hotline was also added.

POWERFUL FIRST STEP

The increased funding “is a powerful first step in ending the era of disinvestment in CUNY,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “It marks the beginning of achieving the goal of dramatically increasing City support for CUNY.”

During budget negotiations, PSC First Vice President Steve London praised the council's leadership and the mayor for working together to end “the pattern of cuts and partial restorations” that had characterized discussions of CUNY funding in the past.

During his campaign for mayor, de Blasio said that decades of funding cuts had “undermined CUNY's historic role as a stepping stone to the middle class for more than a generation of working-class youth.” He put forward a big vision of boosting CUNY funding by \$150 million, with the increase to be paid for by scaling back corporate tax breaks.

This year's executive budget plan, de Blasio's first as mayor, took a significant step toward that goal. The



Left: Councilmember Stephen Levin (L) listens to PSC activist Paul Washington (R). Above (from left): Union members Ron Hayduk and Joyce Moorman meet with Councilmember James Vacca.



Meeting with Councilmember Julissa Ferreras during “CUNY at the Council,” the PSC's annual grassroots lobbying effort.

new money for STEM programs is slated to grow from \$19 million in the coming year to \$51 million in fiscal year 2017. Targets for the new spending include enrolling more STEM students in CUNY's ASAP program, which helps community college students advance to their degree, and greater resources for academic advisement.

Earlier this spring, the PSC advanced a long-term proposal for how the \$150 million increase could best be put to work (see *Clarion*, May 2014, at tinyurl.com/clarion-bud-

get-5-14). In addition to investment in STEM programs, the union's plan calls for 1,000 new full-time faculty lines, restoring City funding to at least the per-student level of 2008, and an ambitious need-based scholarship program.

The new faculty hiring should emphasize recruitment from existing part-time faculty, who already know CUNY students well, and greater efforts to hire people of color, PSC leaders said. As a “down payment” on the 1,000 new positions, the union proposed 100 new hires in the coming fiscal year.

Bowen and PSC Secretary Arthurine DeSola testified before the coun-

cil's Higher Education Committee in support of funding for need-based financial aid. Existing aid programs let too many students and prospective students fall through the cracks,

Ending the era of disinvestment in CUNY

they said, especially undocumented students, part-time students, and those who are self-supporting without children. “Financial aid offices at CUNY could target this aid directly to where the most need exists, as they did under the now defunded ‘Safety Net’ financial aid program, initiated by the council a decade ago,” the PSC leaders testified.

Both these elements advocated by the PSC – the 100 new lines and

money for need-based aid – were supported in a May 29 letter signed by Higher Education Committee Chair Inez Barron and 24 other council members. Welcoming the added funds in the mayor's executive budget plan, the letter said that “more is needed in order to be able to provide for the quality of instruction that comes from lower student-faculty ratios.” The council members' letter emphasized that expanding the presence of people of color on CUNY's faculty must be an institutional goal.

'MORE IS NEEDED'

The statement was released three weeks after the PSC's annual “CUNY at the Council” grassroots lobby day; Borough of Manhattan Community College Chapter Chair Joyce Moorman was among 100 CUNY faculty, staff and students who took part in this year's effort. “The reception we got was very positive, sympathetic and knowledgeable about the underfunding of CUNY by the City and the State,” Moorman told *Clarion*. Many council members and staffers are CUNY graduates themselves, she added, and they recognize the problems that PSC activists describe.

This year's increases in CUNY funding marked an important change in direction, PSC activists say. Building on these gains next year will take a sustained effort – and it's an effort they plan to make.



From left: Marcia Newfield, PSC VP for Part-time Personnel, and PSC President Barbara Bowen strategize with CUNY students & NYPIRG's Ben Fraimow.



Brooklyn College student Carolina Guerrella (L) makes a point to Councilmember Daniel Garodnick (R).

Spring 2014 chapter elections

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

The PSC's Spring 2014 chapter elections were largely uncontested. The sole exception was at Hunter College, where ten candidates were running for the chapter's nine Delegate Assembly positions.

Nonetheless, there was significant turnover in local chapter leadership. Eight new chapter chairs were voted in and more than half of those elected this spring are new to their positions.

CHAPTER CONCERNS

The newly formed Guttman Community College chapter held its first election this spring, with a 50% voter turnout. The new school enrolled its first students in 2012, and its campus PSC chapter was officially established a little over a year ago.

Alia Tyner, an assistant professor at Guttman and its first PSC chapter chair, says the chapter is working to ensure that college policies provide bargaining unit members with the same rights as those at other CUNY campuses. "We've had several issues where the things created by Guttman were not aligned with the [PSC-CUNY] contract," Tyner told *Clarion*.

"It's an old saw to say, 'The union is only as strong as its members make it,'" wrote Michael Handis, newly elected chapter chair at the CUNY Graduate Center, in a letter to chapter members. "But it's an old saw that's worth some reflection." Handis urged members take an active role in building the union at the GC, "helping to create a space for representation, dialogue, solidarity and faculty strength."

Sigmund Shen, the newly elected chapter chair at LaGuardia Community College, says members at his chapter are thinking about how to address pressing issues like full-time faculty work load and conditions for adjuncts. Shen, who has served as a PSC delegate for six years, says many are ready to join a strong contract campaign. "They're hoping for significant movement," he told *Clarion*, "and they're hungry to know what they can do to get the most out of this contract."

Albert Sherman, re-elected as chair of the CLT chapter, said its main issue is CUNY's imposition of new timesheets: "But this chapter is strong, and I believe we will work it out."

Half of PSC chapters held votes this year.

Local leaders taking office

Names of those elected and their slates are listed below. Those who were re-elected are listed in regular type; names of those newly elected are in italics. Complete results are on the PSC website at psc-cuny.org/about-us/committees/elections.

Bronx Community College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, Sharon Persinger; Vice Chair, *Alex Wolf*; Secretary, *Sharon Utakis*; Officers-at-Large, *Simon Davis*, Nicole McDaniel, *Jawied Nawabi*, *Kerry Ojakian*; Delegates to the DA, Sharon Persinger, Leonard Dick, *Peter Kolozi*, *Maria Treglia*, *Alex Wolf*; Alternates to the DA, *John Athanasourelis*, *Allison Gorr*, *Claudio Mazzatenta*, *Sharon Utakis*; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Laroi Lawton

Brooklyn College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, *Alex Vitale*; Vice Chair, *James Davis*; Secretary, Karl Steel; Officers-at-Large, *Alan Aja*, *David Arnou*, *Carolina Bank-Muñoz*, Joseph Entin; Delegates to the DA, *Alex Vitale*, *Scott Dexter*, Ken Estey, Jean Grassman, *Mobina Hashmi*, Timothy Shortell, Jocelyn Wills; Alternates to the DA, *John Auerbach*, *Veronica Manlow*, *Priya Parmar*, Greg Smithsimon; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, William Gargan, Diana Irene Sosa

City College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, Alan Feigenberg; Vice Chair, *Susan DiRaimo*; Secretary, *Harold Forsythe*; Officers-at-Large, *Carla Cappetti*, *William Crain*, Michael Green, *Richard Steinberg*; Delegates to the DA, Alan Feigenberg, Philip Barnett, *Hazel Carter*, *Susan DiRaimo*, *Harold Forsythe*, *Carol Huang*, *Gerardo Renique*; Alternates to the DA, Joseph Davis, *Iris Lopez*, *Kathy McDonald*, *Marie Nazon*

CUNY Central Office: Chair, Julio Caragiulo; Delegates to the DA, Julio Caragiulo

College Lab Technicians: (College Lab Technicians Slate) Chair, Albert Sherman; Vice Chair, Alan Pearlman; Secretary, Amy Jeu; Delegates to the DA, Albert Sherman, *John Graham*, Amy Jeu, Camille McIntyre, Fitz Richardson; Alternates to the DA, Joy Johnson, Henry Wang

Graduate Center: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, *Michael Handis*; Vice Chair, *Penelope Lewis*; Officers-at-Large, *Stanley Aronowitz*, *Michelle Fine*, *Stephanie Luce*; Delegates to the DA, *Michael Handis*, *David Chapin*, *Wendy Luttrell*; Alternates to the DA, *Stephen Brier*, *Michelle Chen*, *Dagmar Herzog*, *Julie Skurski*

Guttman Community College: Chair, *Alia Tyner-Mullings*; Vice Chair, *Andrea Morrell*; Delegates to the DA, *Alia Tyner-Mullings*

Hostos Community College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, *Lizette Colón*; Delegates to the DA, *Lizette Colón*, *Craig Bernardini*, *Lee Phillips*; Alternates to the DA, *Marcella Bencivenni*, *Eddy Garcia*, *Olga Steinberg Neifaeh*; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, *Iber Poma*

Hunter College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, *Tom Angotti*; Secretary, Blanca Vázquez; Delegates to the DA, Tom Angotti, *Tami Gold*, *Michael Fabricant*, David Winn, *Barbara Berney*, Franklin Mirer, *Michael Lewis*, Tim Portluck, Tanya Agathocleous, *Steve Burghardt*

John Jay College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, *Nivedita Majumdar*; Vice Chair, *John Pittman*; Secretary, *Jay Gates*; Officers-at-Large, *Elizabeth Hovey*, *Allison Kavey*, *Gerald Markowitz*, *Gina Martinez*; Delegates to the DA, *Nivedita Majumdar*, Avram Bornstein, Holly Clarke, *Arlene Geiger*, Peter Mameli, Paul Narkunas, *John Pittman*, *Staci*

Strobl; Alternates to the DA, *Luis Barrios*, *Lyell Davies*, *Robert DeLucia*, *Jay Gates*, *Daryl Wout*; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, *Michelle Doney*, Dan Pinello

LaGuardia Community College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, *Sigmund Shen*; Vice Chair, *Timothy Coogan*; Secretary, *Karen Miller*; Officers-at-Large, Evelyn Burg, *Rebekah Johnson*, *Steven Ovidia*, Eduardo Vianna; Delegates to the DA, Sigmund Shen, Timothy Coogan, Sarah Durand, Francine Egger-Sider, Daniel Lynch, *Justin Rogers-Cooper*, George Walters; Alternates to the DA, Nancy Berke, Karen Miller, *Larose Parris*, Laura Tanenbaum, Rachel Youens; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, *Soloman Kone*, Terry Parker

Queens College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, Jonathan Buchsbaum; Vice Chair, Hester Eisenstein; Secretary, Roopali Mukherjee; Officers-at-Large, Alyson Cole, Julie George, Keena Lipsitz, Richard Maxwell; Delegates to the DA, Jonathan Buchsbaum, Hester Eisenstein, Hugh English, *Joy Fuqua*, Carol Giardina, Edmund Leites, Roopali Mukherjee, Manny Sanudo, Abe Walker, Jack Zevin; Alternates to the DA, Ann Davison, *David Gerwin*, *Ron Hayduk*, *Inas Kelly*, Jeff Maskovsky, Bette Weidman; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Ben Chitty, Marci Goodman

York College: (New Caucus Slate) Chair, *Scott Sheidlower*; Secretary, William Ashton; Officers-at-Large, *Lidia Gonzalez*, *Tania Levey*, *Rishi Nath*, *Steven Weisblatt*; Delegates to the DA, *Scott Sheidlower*, Shirley Frank, *Tonya Shearin-Patterson*; Alternates to the DA, Robert Aceves, *Kristin Davies*, *Tania Levey*, *Rishi Nath*; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Sherrian Grant-Fordham, *Ronald Stanley*

Adjunct salary schedule

Teaching and non-teaching adjuncts who as of July 1 have worked for six semesters university-wide during the preceding three years, and who have not received a movement in salary schedule during that period, are entitled to receive a movement in salary schedule to the next higher hourly rate dollar amount on the salary scale.

If an adjunct has a summer assignment July 1 and later, the increase should take effect on July 1. For adjuncts who are eligible for a movement in schedule but are not working during the summer, the increase will become effective on August 27, 2014, at the start of the Fall semester, if they have an assignment.

The elected slates were affiliated with the New Caucus, which has held union-wide office in the PSC since 2000, at every campus except Guttman, where candidates were unaffiliated. At Hunter College, all New Caucus candidates were elected and drew between 153 and 125 votes each. Sándor John, an adjunct associate professor of history who ran as an independent, received 61 votes in his unsuccessful bid for one of Hunter's seats in the union's Delegate Assembly.

PSC elections run on a three-year cycle: half of the chapters held elections for local leadership this year, while the other half voted last year. Election for Executive Council and other union-wide positions will be held in Spring 2015. Both local and union-wide officers serve three-year terms.

Chancellor meets PSC retirees



Larry Rushing, professor emeritus of psychology (at left), speaks with new CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken (right), who addressed the PSC Retirees' Chapter on June 9. It was the first time a chancellor has asked to speak to the union group. "I don't believe we're investing at the level we need to [in order] to support institutions of public higher education," Milliken told attendees. "That's a message I think we share, and it's a message that we can deliver more effectively, I think, together."

Your right to annual leave

By DEBRA BERGEN
PSC Director of Contract Enforcement

For full-time members of the teaching faculty, annual leave begins the day immediately following Spring commencement and ends on Tuesday, August 26, 2014. Teaching faculty may not be compelled to work during their annual leave period. The PSC-CUNY contract provides in Article 15.1 that members of the teaching faculty do not have to be available for professional assignments during the annual leave period.

SUMMER PAY

If you are asked to work for any reason during June, July or August, it must be on a voluntary and paid basis. This would include any assignments made by your department

chair or conveyed to you from management, including but not limited to meetings of department committees. If you agree to an assignment during this period, you must be compensated at 60% of the adjunct hourly teaching rate for all non-teaching assignments and at the adjunct teaching rate for all teaching assignments. Faculty who are assigned registration on a voluntary basis who are not compensated for these duties cannot be required to perform registration duties for the Spring 2015 semester, per agreement with CUNY.

Department chairs are to be compensated during the annual leave period at one-ninth of their annual salary multiplied by the number of hours assigned, based on discussion with their college president (see the contract's Article 24.4).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR - 2

Members speak out on the WFP & Cuomo

The endorsement of Governor Andrew Cuomo by the Working Families Party (WFP) has sparked much discussion among PSC activists, as evident in the letters to the editor that follow below. The PSC's state affiliate New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) will make its own endorsement decision in August, and PSC representatives will be part of that process. In 2010, NYSUT made no endorsement in the governor's race.

Members' letters on other topics appear on page 2.

A missed opportunity

● By backing Governor Cuomo, the Working Families Party missed a rare opportunity to advance a truly progressive agenda in New York. The "deal" that was a condition of the WFP's endorsement includes many important goals. But a basic question remains unanswered: Given his record, how could anyone believe that Cuomo can be trusted?

For years, activists have protested against Cuomo's brand of neoliberal fiscal conservatism. "Governor 1%" had ruthlessly imposed austerity on the public sector while subsidizing big business and billionaires.

During these same years, the PSC wisely sought to advance our higher education and public policy agenda by joining the WFP. This strategy paid off most spectacularly by helping elect NYC's most progressive City Council and mayor in decades. The WFP was central to this effort, and PSC participation in it helped win these advances.

But Cuomo has fought hard to undermine this same progressive agenda, from opposing a new tax on the rich to shoving charter schools down our throats. Both as governor and as a prospective presidential candidate, Cuomo's brand of politically savvy maneuvering poses a clear and present danger to the interests of the 99%.

Cuomo's macho advocacy for the rich provoked a backlash, creating an exciting opening for progressives. An April Siena poll showed that an unnamed WFP challenger to Cuomo's left could capture 24% of the vote. In Zephyr Teachout, the party had a solid potential challenger who could give Cuomo a run for his money. The WFP had a real and rare chance to sink Cuomo's brand of neoliberal politics and his national ambitions, while simultaneously expanding support for a real progressive agenda.

Teachout is now challenging Cuomo in the Democratic primary, and she may tap the discontent revealed in that Siena poll. She deserves our support. The WFP had a chance to help lead and build that rebellion – and unfortunately failed to grab it.

Ron Hayduk
Queens College

Politics ain't pretty

● Most progress in New York politics these days comes thanks to a

certain constellation of community organizations and coalition-minded unions (including ours). At its best, this coalition is too small to win all it wants. But the right structure can amplify a coalition's power. We've seen recently that in the Working Families Party – with its ballot line and campaign apparatus – the PSC and its allies have found a way to make our voices louder.

In 2013, years of WFP groundwork yielded a NYC mayor and a Council Progressive Caucus who've already expanded pre-kindergarten and paid sick leave. This year's City budget debate was about how much to add to CUNY! And at its 2014 convention, the WFP moved a mountain. With its endorsement as leverage, the party got Governor Cuomo to drop his opposition to a minimum wage increase, back a broad women's equity agenda, and support a Democratic/WFP majority in the NY State Senate, which would unblock a host of progressive policies. None of this would have happened if our labor-community coalition lacked a megaphone like the WFP.

Politics can't always be beautiful. I'll admit that I would've found it aesthetically satisfying to support a WFP protest candidate for governor. When I vote the WFP ticket this November, I know I won't be pleased by every person on the slate. What matters more, though, is that I'll be proud of the substance of what I'm voting for: meaningful steps toward equality and solidarity here in New York.

Geoffrey Kurtz
BMCC

Pro-Wall Street politicians

● The events at the recent Working Families Party convention should be a clarion call to the members of our union and to all workers in New York that relying on politicians to act in our best interests is a dangerous mistake.

The WFP, at the behest of Mayor Bill de Blasio, endorsed Andrew Cuomo for governor, although he's been a disaster for workers in New York, especially educators. At the same time that we are anxiously awaiting the outcome of two of the most potentially anti-union and anti-worker lawsuits in recent memory – the Vergara case in California that threatens to end tenure, and the *Harris v. Quinn* Supreme Court case that could financially devastate public sector unions – the WFP

and de Blasio conspired to endorse a governor who weakened teacher tenure by making it dependent on standardized test scores and who is supporting and assisting the rapid expansion of non-union charter schools.

The moves by de Blasio and the WFP are a betrayal, plain and simple, and it's time to turn our back on them as they did to us. We should, instead, be mobilizing our union to mount the most aggressive fight we can for a decent contract. Given the recent United Federation of Teachers contract, the city and state will likely offer a contract that will be a slap in the face, especially to our super-exploited adjuncts. Rather than pro-Wall Street politicians, we should rely on our 25,000+ members who, if organized and prepared to fight like hell, could make history.

Alex Wolf
Bronx Community College

The impact on local races

● As an activist in the Working Families Party and one of its founding members, I was both disappointed and unsurprised by the WFP state committee's decision to endorse Governor Andrew Cuomo. I wish that the WFP had followed its activist base and endorsed Zephyr Teachout, but the financial pressure of large unions such as 1199, SEIU 32BJ and the United Federation of Teachers was too great for the WFP to risk endorsing Teachout.

I ask PSC members not to despair, but to see the WFP endorsement of Cuomo as an opportunity. Four years ago, the WFP had to ask Cuomo to be on its ballot line. This time around he made concessions and promises to get the WFP line.

The real action, though, is lower down on the ballot. Unless activists can defeat Republicans in swing seats and defeat the five members of the "Independent Democrats" who have kept Republicans in power since 2013, none of those promised reforms – public financing of elections, increasing the minimum wage, and passage of a NY Dream Act – can be a reality.

The WFP and PSC can be most effective on this local level, where we helped to elect a progressive majority in the City Council and can now help create a real Democratic majority in the State Senate. I will begrudgingly vote for Cuomo

on the WFP line to ensure that the WFP keeps its ballot line to elect progressives.

The PSC needs to stay in the WFP to be a progressive voice with it. I ask my PSC brothers and sisters not to despair at the endorsement of Cuomo, but to use the money that he and the large unions have promised to make a Democratic Senate a reality and so pass the progressive agenda that Cuomo has committed to sign into law.

Steven Levine
LaGuardia Community College

Don't back "Governor 1%"

● I am incredibly disappointed by the WFP's endorsement of Cuomo, a decision it made in spite of the spirited opposition of its grassroots membership and much of its state committee, albeit not a majority. Cuomo's attempted backpedaling on his commitments the very evening of the nomination made this choice even more questionable, given his

steady record on behalf of New York's 1%.

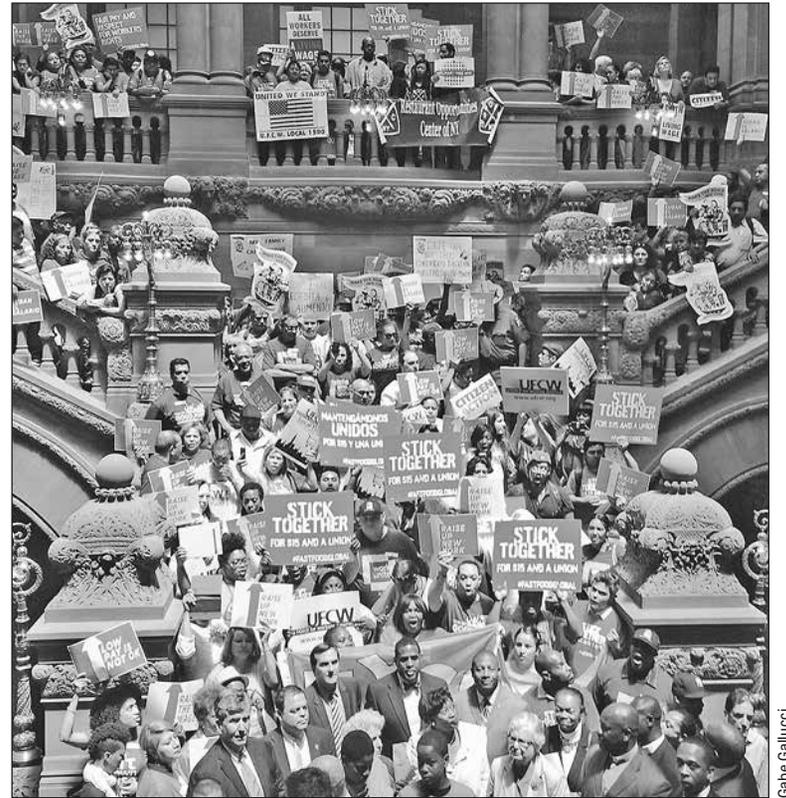
This reflects the impact, possibly the stranglehold, on the WFP of the risk-averse leadership of New York's largest unions and their willingness to cut a deal that may be in the short-term interest of their membership but is to the detriment of New Yorkers generally – including their own members' interests in the longer run.

Some argue that the WFP could not afford to go against these union's wishes. But while backing an independent, progressive candidate against Cuomo would not have been easy, it would have given the party an opportunity to dramatically expand its base, its number of activists and its political impact – in the process, becoming less dependent on the largest, and conservative, New York unions that are still calling the shots. Many unions that might have left in the short term would find it in their interest to come back to a larger, more dynamic WFP in the long term.

In endorsing Cuomo over Zephyr Teachout, the WFP lost a major opportunity to build a grassroots movement against the pro-corporate, pro-market neoliberalism that dominates the Democratic Party.

Eileen Moran
Retirees Chapter

Demanding a higher wage



Hundreds of minimum-wage workers gathered inside the State Capitol on June 17, near the end of the legislative session. They called on lawmakers to raise New York's minimum wage from \$8.00 to \$10.10 an hour, indexing it to inflation and allowing cities to raise it even higher.

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15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Join the contract fight

The PSC is back at the bargaining table – and our ability to negotiate the best possible contract depends on the strength of our members. That strength comes from both negotiating inside and mobilizing outside.

“As we enter what may be tough economic and ideological battles, we will need to call on you to stand up, speak up and

maybe even act up,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen.

Intense negotiations are expected to last throughout the summer. You may be needed to petition, rally or participate in other actions. Be ready to join with other members to win the best possible contract. Take a couple of minutes so you can stay updated on the contract campaign: sign up at psc-cuny.org/contractcampaign.

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Journalism & social justice

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

Legacy of Hunter professor remembered

CUNY and coal country aren't often mentioned together, but this year they intersected through the Aronson Awards, presented annually by Hunter College's Department of Film and Media Studies. Named for James Aronson, a founder of the journalism concentration at Hunter College, the awards spotlight reporting that has an impact on society, through exposing injustice or bringing about reform.

Chris Hamby of the Center for Public Integrity was among those honored, for his series exposing the collusion of doctors and lawyers with the coal industry. Produced by the center's workers' rights unit, it details how the coal industry works to deny the benefit claims of miners sick and dying of black lung disease, and shows how a clinic sponsored by Johns Hopkins University departed from standard medical practice to take the coal companies' side.

“I spent a lot of time in West Virginia with people who were slowly suffocating to death. They had been essentially screwed by a system that was completely stacked against them and they had no recourse,” said Hamby in a Center for Public Integrity press release. “These are some of the most voiceless people in the country.”

INVESTIGATIVE STORIES

Following Hamby's series, “Breathless and Burdened,” John Hopkins suspended its black lung program. Members of Congress asked for a federal investigation and the US Department of Labor announced a procedural change to the system that deals with black lung claims.

It's that kind of social-justice journalism that the Hunter College Department of Film and Media Studies highlights each year with the Aronson Awards.

Summer issue

This summer issue of *Clarion* is eight pages; we will return to our usual 12-page format in the fall.



At the 2014 Aronson Awards (from left): Rebecca Carroll, David Alm, Chris Hamby, Blanca Vázquez, David Carr and Tami Gold. Carroll, managing editor of XOJane.com, hosted the April 28 awards ceremony; Hamby and *New York Times* columnist Carr were among the honorees; Alm, Vázquez and Gold are all faculty in Hunter's Film & Media Studies Department.

Blanca Vázquez, an adjunct assistant professor of media studies, says the awards committee (on which she serves) solicits submissions and reads through 70 to 80 nominations. Recognizing investigative journalism, Vázquez says, is important in a time when resources for in-depth stories are dwindling. “We're living in a world where it's more important [than ever] to critically understand what's going on,” Vázquez told *Clarion*. “We need to be able to connect the dots” – but changes in the media industry are making that kind of reporting less common.

David Alm, also an adjunct assistant professor in the department, directed the Aronson Awards this year. In the classroom, he talks about the challenges journalists face in doing investigative stories, including getting the time and the resources to do their projects.

The Aronson Awards, Alm says, are a chance for students to talk to working journalists and hear how stories with impact are done. “Everything that we talk about in the

classroom is real. It's not just academic,” Alm told *Clarion*. Through the awards, he says, “students have a chance to see how journalists can work on behalf of people whose problems might otherwise be ignored.”

Students hear how stories with impact are done.

James Aronson was a faculty member at Hunter for 24 years. He had previously worked as a reporter for the *New York Post* and *The New York Times*, and in 1948 was one of the founders of the *National Guardian*. Coverage by this crusading news weekly in the early 1950s led to the exoneration of five black New Jersey residents who had been unjustly convicted of murder. In 1953, Aronson declined to answer questions about the *National Guardian* when he was called before Sen. Joseph McCarthy's Internal Security Subcommittee.

Aronson was critical of the news media; in his view it was often subservient to government when it should challenge and question. But he still held out hope that dedicated reporters could do important stories.

“Despite my grave doubt that the press of the country is willing to reform itself, I remain a realistic optimist about journalism,” wrote Aronson in his book, *The Press and the Cold War*. “I believe that there is in the United States a company of honest journalists of all ages, conscious of the potential power of an informed people, who will never give up the effort to establish an honorable communication network.”

James Roman, the Film and Media Studies Department's chair, says the awards continue Aronson's legacy. “With the awards, and bringing in the journalists who receive them, our students see what compelling journalism can do,” Roman told *Clarion*.

FUTURE JOURNALISTS

Roman, who has taught at Hunter for more than 35 years, recalls that Aronson, a distinguished professor when Roman was hired, was always “very approachable” and “a great mentor to students.”

Training the journalists of the future is also a concern of the Aron-

son Awards, which include honors for reporting by Hunter students. This year's awardees included Angely Mercado, a student in a Hunter class that produces a South Bronx community newspaper, *The Hunts Point Express*.

The idea of a not-for-profit community newspaper staffed by students was first proposed by Hunter journalism professor Bernard Stein, who retired this year. Founded in 2006, *The Hunts Point Express* provides students with real-world experience covering one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. “I think community news that values ordinary people and their lives is by its very nature social-justice journalism,” Stein told *Clarion*.

UNDER-COVERED COMMUNITIES

While working on the *Express*, students cover stories neglected or under-covered by mainstream media outlets. Environmental justice issues are a daily reality for the community, home to more than a dozen waste transfer systems and constant truck traffic in the neighborhood.

Mercado, Stein's former student and a Hunter College senior, won an Aronson student award for a series of housing-justice articles she wrote for the *Express*. Mercado investigated a decrepit building where the landlord neglected repairs and was working to force tenants out.

“It was shocking to see and hear some of the violations,” said Mercado, who learned of fires caused by faulty wiring and a window that wouldn't shut. “There was this feeling I need to write [about] this soon,” Mercado said.

In covering the neighborhood's struggles, Mercado also found a vibrant community with salsa tributes in public parks, urban farming in vacant lots, and panels with some of the neighborhood's original graffiti artists. Through the class, she not only reported on issues in the neighborhood, but learned its history and the context of the issues she wrote about.

When she took Stein's class as a junior, Mercado wasn't in the media studies department. She's now concentrating in journalism through a dual major in English and Media Studies. “I always admire when people positively change or shed light on a situation,” she told *Clarion*.

Hayden Greene