In a referendum on Pathways, the CUNY administration's overhaul of general education, 92% voted “no confidence” in the new curriculum. More than 60% of 7,202 eligible voters took part in the referendum among full-time faculty, which was conducted by the American Arbitration Association at the request of the PSC. There were 3,996 votes supporting a statement of no confidence; 323 votes against; and three voided ballots. An absolute majority of CUNY's full-time faculty has thus expressed its lack of confidence in the administration's new curriculum, which is scheduled to go into effect this Fall. “The vote is a stunning rebuke to the Pathways curriculum and the coercive measures used to impose it,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen.
The members of the PSC Library Faculty Committee have “no confidence” in Pathways. We believe that faculty governance, especially the faculty’s historical role in deciding curriculum, was subverted by the process in which Pathways was designed and imposed. Moreover, we believe the Pathways structure does not foster robust, inquiry-based learning and reduces the opportunities for students to receive classroom instruction from librarians.

Jill Cirasella, John Drobnicki, Lisa Ellis, Robert Farrell, William Gargon, Mariana Regalado, Sharon Swacker, Tess Tobin, Elizabeth Tompkins for the PSC Library Faculty Committee

PSC President Barbara Bowen re-sponds: The two-tier labor system remains the most intractable and de-structive issue in higher education. I can understand why advocates those whose primary employmen-t is at CUNY, would feel stung when the union conducts a referen-dum in which they are not included. When so much of an adjunct’s daily experience at CUNY is about exclusion – from job security, reasonable pay, office space, even respect – be-ing excluded from a union vote could be especially harmful.

But the deeply ingrained two-tier labor system could not, of course, be dismantled by the inclusion of adjuncts in this vote. The union is working incrementally toward that end, most immediately by securing adjunct health insurance, but it will take a massive economic and political reform to accomplish it.

The referendum was a tactic, not a “basic right of membership.” Adjuncts have the right to participate in leadership elections and contract ratification votes, just as full-timers do. The referendum was limited to full-time faculty because it is full-time faculty who have a statutory role in the development of curriculum – a role that has been usurped by the Pathways process – and full-time faculty whose views of Pathways have been consistently misrepresented by the CUNY ad-ministration. The union’s elected delegates discussed the issue at length and voted overwhelmingly to affirm the design of the referendum (see page 7).

Many adjuncts worked their hearts out in support of the refer-endum, as did many full-timers in support of adjunct health insur-ance. That kind of solidarity holds the promise for overcoming the two-tier system.

Further thoughts on CUNYfirst

I’m glad to see PSC members’ very active discussion on CUNYfirst (see pages 10-11) that followed Clarion’s publication of my op-ed “CUNYfirst, Users Last” (May 2013) on this new computer system. I’m writing to add a couple of further comments:

(1) Enterprise resource planning systems (ERPs) like CUNYfirst are massive software systems that integrate the data flow of all busi-ness functions (inventory, sales, accounts payable and receivable, human resources, etc.) across a corporation. These systems began to make their appearance in the computer association by Professor Petersen, chair of the Depart-ment of Sociology at Brooklyn College.

The end of Spring semester seemed to be the “season of the generals” at CUNY. At Baruch, retired General Wesley Clark received an honorary degree and was a featured speaker at the college’s May 30 commencement ceremony. At Macaulay, retired General David Petraeus, former top commander of US forces in Iraq and Afghan-istan and former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, at Macaulay, Petraeus will lead a fall 2013 seminar “examining the developments that could po-sition the United States – and its North American partners – to lead the world out of the current global economic slowdown,” focusing on energy, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and information tech-nology. He will work closely with 16 students who must complete an application with faculty recommen-dations and be vetted by a selection committee. Petraeus will be simul-taneously teaching part-time at the University of Southern California. He has also just been hired by pri-vate equity giant KKR, where he will chair an internal institute focused on public policy and invest-ments in emerging markets. “CUNY is profoundly honored to welcome Dr. Petraeus to our aca-demic community,” said Chancellor Matthew Gold-stein. “Our students will have a unique opportunity to learn about public policy firsthand from a distinguished leader with extraordinary experience and expertise in international security issues, intelligence matters and nation-building.”

Petraeus’s appointment at Mac-aulay sparked a different reaction among other members of the CUNY community: a petition calling for Petraeus’s appointment to be re-considered quickly garnered hundreds of signatures. “He was integrally involved in an illegal war and oc-cupation that killed hundreds of thousands of people, inflamed sec-tarian conflict, and left a country in ruins,” said Mike Stivers, a junior philosophy major at Baruch, who was among those signing the peti-tion. A March report by the BBC Arabic and the Guardian newspa-per tied Petraeus and two of his top advisors to local paramilitaries that tortured thousands of their fellow Iraqis in US-funded detention cen-ters. “[CUNY] is blinded to the fact that this guy has been accused of war crimes,” said Stivers.

Both Petraeus and the depart-ment of sociology and anthropology at Baruch, noted that while commanding US forces in Iraq and Afghan-istan, Petraeus incorporat-ed anthropologists into military Human Terrain Teams that closely studied local populations in order to more effectively carry out counter-insurgency efforts. This approach was envisioned in The US Army / Ma-rine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual (University of Chicago Press, 2007), for which Petraeus was a lead author. The tactic has been sharply criticized by many anthropologists for violent academic ethics that endangers independent anthropolo-gists working in the field.

Petraeus, a Vietnam veteran, said he was troubled by the lack of public discussion at CUNY before Petraeus was hired, which would have allowed for an in-depth consider-ation of the ethical and practical is-sues raised by the appointment. “To just appoint people because they are as seen as prestigious is counter-pro ductive,” Petersen said.
Bill Kelly will take over as CUNY’s interim chancellor on July 1, following an eight-year stint as president of the Graduate Center.

Kelly slated to take over on July 1

By JOHN TARLETON

As Graduate Center President William Kelly prepares to become CUNY’s Interim Chancellor on July 1, his departure from the GC has spurred a wave of responses from faculty and students there.

Kelly is widely praised as an effective institutional leader who has brought new resources to the GC and boosted its visibility, and as a likable administrator who is conversant with faculty members’ published work. But others are more critical of the GC’s direction, and many caution that in his new job, Kelly is unlikely to chart a different course from his predecessor’s.

A specialist in American literature who has written a book on the work of Fennimore Cooper, Kelly served on the Queens College faculty from 1976 to 1998, and was appointed to the faculty of the Graduate Center’s doctoral program in English in 1986. He became provost of the GC in 1998 and president in 2005.

“Here’s good about what people here,” said David Nasaw, a distinguished professor of history who characterized the new GC hires as “strikingly diverse.” Under Kelly, he said, the Graduate Center has become “far more vibrant than it’s ever been.”

Joh applicants, he said, “are blown away to have met an administrator who has read their work and can talk with them about it.”

Zoltán Glík, co-director for The Adjunct Project of the Students’ Doctoral Council, criticized Kelly’s support for CUNY’s Pathways curriculum (see page 7), “He and Matthew Goldstein have different styles of operating, but the ideology is fundamentally the same.”

Busch, editor of the GC Advocate, argued that the two share a neoliberal view of higher education.

PATHWAYS

Kelly is chair of the CUNY Pathways Transfer Majors Committees, and was tapped to replace Chancellor Goldstein. At a May 7 town hall meeting at the GC, two weeks after he was appointed to replace Chancellor Goldstein, Kelly told Clarion that he was slower to offer public support. A PSC-DSC protest had previously prompted Kelly and Chancellor Goldstein to write to legislators in Albany to request funding for the change.

In the past year, Kelly has announced a plan to significantly restructure the Graduate Center, with what he has called a “carrot-and-stick” approach to speeding up the graduation of doctoral students.

Inside Higher Ed reported that Kelly wanted “to rethink the ‘roach motel’ concept of graduate school, where ‘you check in and don’t check out.’” When the comment sparked controversy at the GC, Kelly wrote, “I regret the use of a decades-old cliché, but I reaffirm my rejection of that paradigm. Doctoral institutions have a moral obligation to attend to the progress of their students.”

Under the plan, the GC will scale back admissions over the next few years, aiming for a 25% cut by 2015, but will boost stipends for most incoming doctoral students to $25,000 per year for five years, starting this Fall. Their teaching load will also be reduced from two classes to one per semester. (Current graduate students are not included in the new program.) The important issue is making students aware of the start that, although they may not finish the degree in five years, if they don’t, that will be principally a function of life decisions and life choices,” said GC Provost Chase Robinson, who will become the GC’s interim president when Kelly departs.

LESS HOSPITABLE?

The additional resources have been welcomed, particularly given New York City’s cost of living. But concern has also been expressed about whether these changes will make the Graduate Center less hospitable to working-class graduate students whose life situations may not allow them to finish their studies as rapidly as envisioned in Kelly’s plan.

“We’re concerned that a culture of elitism will be fostered that goes against the mission of CUNY to serve the working people of the five boroughs of New York City,” said Alyson Spurgas, a co-director with The Adjunct Project. Kelly argues that the increased fellowships will help diversity in admissions.

“He’s a complicated figure,” said Stanley Aronowitz, a distinguished professor of sociology who thinks the GC has become more homogenous. “It’s a whole new world around here.”

Graduate Center where a whole range of provocative ideas and issues are being discussed, and nothing is beyond the limits,” Michelle Fine told Clarion. David Na saw also rejects the idea that the GC has become more “mediocrities” at the GC today, Aronowitz says, scholars with unconventional interests have also been increasingly marginalized. He contends that the GC has become “mainstreamed” as it has sought to improve its alumni and donor rankings.

“Bill Kelly’s definition of excellence is whether you are recognized as important in your profession,” Aronowitz said. “In terms of fi nances and services, he has done a very good job, but perhaps the price is too high.”

THE SEARCH

But that is a minority view. Kelly has designed and supported a Graduate Center where a whole range of provocative ideas and issues are being discussed, and nothing is beyond the limits,” Michelle Fine told Clarion. David Nasaw also rejects the idea that the GC has become more homogenous. “It’s a whole new world around here. The place was once filled with historians who either did the US or Europe. When most faculty discuss intellectual life at the GC during Kelly’s tenure, they tend to use words like “dynamic.”

Perhaps, inevitably, there are rumors about whether Kelly will be considered by the Board of Trustees as it conducts its search for CUNY’s new permanent chancellor. Asked about this at the May 7 town hall meeting, Kelly said flatly that this is not allowed by CUNY’s rules.

According to the University’s Manual of General Policy, “An interim chancellor shall not be a candidate for chancellor.” However, CUNY’s Board of Trustees is unusual in that it appoints a chancellor, not the Board’s subcontractors, who will serve the working people of the five boroughs of New York City.”

“Mike has been able to do a lot without at tending to the Board’s subcontractors,” said Kelly. “It can suspend or change a policy provision, or even a section of its Bylaws, with a simple majority of its 17 voting members. The current rule that the GC’s last chancellor search, to avoid having the interim position “turn into a permanent platform,” The New York Times reported in 1997.

CUNY’s Manual of General Policy has a similarly worded restriction against an interim college president being a candidate for the permanent position at that school. In 1999, however, the board added an amendment that allows for exceptions. The most recent such exception came in January of this year, when Diane Call, interim president of Queensborough Community College, was appointed as QC’s president by the Board of Trustees.

For the moment, the commitment of Kelly as interim chancellor “makes a lot of sense,” commented Michael Gordon, editor of the New York Post. “He’s smart and politically savvy.” As GC president, Busch said, Kelly has been able to do a lot without at tending to the Board’s subcontractors.

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As the interim chancellor, Kelly’s commitment to the GC’s mission will be the focus of his time at the helm of the Graduate Center. “It is an institution that serves the working people of the five boroughs of New York City. It is an institution that is committed to expanding access to higher education and to developing the skills of its students,” said Kelly. “This is a commitment that I take very seriously.”
For the love of our working conditions – and ourselves

By JOAN GREENBAUM

Earlier this spring, Joan Greenbaum, co-founder of the PSC Health & Safety Watchdogs network, was given the New York State United Teachers Unsung Hero Award at NYSTA’s annual Health and Safety Conference. The award honors a NYSTA member who has gone above and beyond in addressing health and safety problems for his or her local. Greenbaum is professor emerita of environmental psychology at the CUNY Graduate Center, and of computer information systems at LaGuardia Community College.

Below is the talk that Greenbaum gave at the conference, in which she analyzes stress in the workplace as a health and safety issue.

We are facing increasing and often invisible hazards in our workplaces. Tonight I am going to suggest that some of these unseen hazards are potentially as dangerous as chemicals and toxins were on factory floors back before OSHA was founded. And I will strongly urge that we use the same grassroots union energy that got OSHA started back in 1970 to tackle the invisible problems now in our post-industrial workplaces, namely in our classrooms, offices, hospitals and university buildings.

PAST BATTLES

It is interesting to remember that it took the collective spirit of thousands upon thousands of industrial workers in the late 1960s and 1970s to fight for the right to know about and indeed limit the unseen and then unknown hazards in their factories. Their experiences, combined with union pressures and the then unsusing hero Tony Mazzocchi, led to the passage of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, during the very Republican presidency of Richard Nixon. To get such a bill passed, Mazzocchi and students, together with workers, had to begin to take seriously the illnesses that workers were talking about and find ways to document them and research their causes. (For a good account, see Les Leopold’s 2007 book, The Man Who Hated Work and Loved Labor: The Life and Times of Tony Mazzocchi.)

Together we have made great strides in identifying environmental problems outside our workplaces – though climate change and the more frequent storms we are experiencing are seriously affecting our working and learning conditions. Together, we have learned to take big steps toward identifying health and safety conditions inside our buildings, such as leaking pipes, mold conditions, crumbling ceilings and the like. In both areas – outside and inside our workworlds – we have done much and still have much to do. But tonight I am going to ask you to think about conditions inside our bodies, and the issues of how we experience and feel about our working conditions.

We all know, but usually don’t stop to acknowledge, that stress that is the huge invisible hazard in our workplace now. Stress that is caused by working conditions that go beyond what they used to be. Stress caused by over-work, lack of recognition, lack of respect and many other issues that we will talk about today. And these invisible hazards have real physical effects on our bodies, causing us health problems that cause more harm and costs for us, our families and society.

First, let’s talk about some of the conditions that cause stress in our daily working lives. Chief among the hazards facing us, so rarely talked about, are the changes in work practices that come down from on high on what seems like a constant basis. State and local governments change tests and standards. And regarding change requirements, evaluation and metrics are brought down on us from all possible sources. It feels as if as soon as we have scurried to reach one target, another one comes popping up in its place. In the industrial period, factory managers employed the “carrot and the stick” to motivate workers. Now, there are no more carrots, no vegetables – just sticks. And we are playing Whac-A-Mole with these sticks as we try to fend off one performance measurement after another.

EDUCATION WORKERS

In colleges, for example, we are expected to graduate students faster, get them through remedial and basic courses with tests imposed on us by those who don’t understand what is stressful today, and water down our curricula to get this all done. It’s metrics, metrics and more metrics. And we are playing those tests, not having the time or resources to figure out a way to begin to document, study and organize against new dangers. A call to organize against new dangers.

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In colleges, for example, we are expected to graduate students faster, get them through remedial and basic courses with tests imposed on us by the same colleagues we are struggling to get through the day. And we are playing Whac-A-Mole with those tests as we try to fend off one performance measurement after another.

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Chancellors & corporations

By NANCY SCOLA & PETER HOGNESS

In late January, Baruch College’s The Ticker reported that CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein had been named chairman of the board for the J.P. Morgan Funds, the mutual funds of JPMorgan Chase. The board oversees 140 different mutual funds, with total assets of $858 billion. “Goldstein’s role at CUNY,” reported The Ticker, “will remain unchanged in the face of the new chairmanship.” That wasn’t true for long. Just two months after his appointment, Goldstein announced his resignation after 14 years as CUNY chancellor. With the move, he reaffirmed his renewed attention to Goldstein’s long-standing service on corporate boards, and other blends of academic and corporate roles should raise concerns. As CUNY prepares to choose its first new chancellor in the 21st century, any corporate connections of potential nominees are likely to draw close scrutiny.

J.P. MORGAN FUNDS

Goldstein began serving as a trustee on individual J.P. Morgan Funds in 2003. He joined the full board in 2005. Most recently the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) filings state that Goldstein received a salary of $325,000 for his work as a J.P. Morgan Funds trustee. For at least the past five years, his J.P. Morgan income has been about two-thirds that of his CUNY salary.

But his new role as the board’s chair, which began on January 1, comes with increased responsibilities and probably a big bump in pay. The board’s previous chair was paid $500,000 per year. If Goldstein matches or exceeds that amount, it means that J.P. Morgan Funds is now paying him more than his $490,000 annual salary from CUNY.

PRIMARY COMMITMENT

According to the CUNY rules governing the chancellor’s role, outside work “may not interfere with the executive’s primary commitment to CUNY.” There are hard limits in place as well. CUNY officials in policy-making posts are limited to two days per month of “outside consultation or professional activity,” and these days are charged to annual leave. That limit dates from the 1980s, when New York legislators expressed concern that commitments to corporate boards might diffuse the attention that should be paid to university affairs (see sidebar).

Donald Schepers, associate dean at Baruch’s Zicklin School of Business and former director of Baruch’s Zicklin Center for Corporate Integrity, says that Goldstein’s upgrade to chairman of the J.P. Morgan Funds means a significantly increased time commitment. Chairs are public figures, charged with counterbalancing their full-time corporate counterparts. “Chairman of the board, of any board, is going to be a demanding job,” says Schepers, and a chair might be expected to spend more than one-half of a regular work week on his or her duties.

Goldstein’s predecessor as board chair, Ferguson Reid, gave an estimate of his work week in a May 18, 2004, letter to the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission, which is posted on the SEC’s website. “I have served as an independent chairman of the J.P. Morgan Funds (or predecessor funds) for over 14 years,” wrote Reid on an ongoing basis, he explained, “on average I spend more than one-half of a regular business week on the affairs of our Boards and our Funds and can assure you that most of our trustees would be willing to do the same if called upon.”

According to Fund Director Intelligence, an industry news site, when Reid decided it was time to retire from the role, he felt that the fund transition began a year in advance. Reid said at the time that increased regulatory pressure, the complexity of financial products subject to trust agreement approval, and a “dramatic” increase in the scope of the J.P. Morgan Funds’ business had created “a bigger workload and greater responsibilities in the boardroom.”

That partnership arguably benefits JPMorgan as well, however, and serving on corporate boards can raise questions about competing objectives. “Sitting on Macmillan or McGraw-Hill would be a definite conflict of interest,” says Schepers, given these firms’ financial stake in higher education. While Goldstein does not sit on the board of any firms in the education industry, several of the J.P. Morgan Funds do hold stock in education-related companies, including McGraw-Hill and Pearson, the London-based educational testing and publishing company. One J.P. Morgan fund holds $514 million worth of stock in American Campus Communities, a developer that has a contract to build dorms at the College of Staten Island.

Not the first time

Corporate work was a contentious issue for CUNY’s previous chancellor, Annette Schecter. When Matthew Goldstein, president of Baruch at the time, circulated a letter supporting Reynolds after she was criticized for her increased time commitments to corporate boards.

Reynolds responded to the criticism by saying that “if she leaves at 3 p.m. for a corporate board meeting but she has already worked seven hours, then she does not consider that a day away from CUNY.” The New York Times reported in 1994, “The executive pay plan is 35 hours,” Special Counsel to the Chancellor David Field told the paper. “If you’ve worked the hours, you’ve worked the hours.”

But CUNY’s two-days-a-month limit, adopted at the insistence of the State Legislature in 1985, is not framed as a minimum time commitment to CUNY; that was already covered by the Executive Compensation Plan’s 35-hour workweek. Instead, the two-day limit defines the maximum of outside involvement.

For her corporate service, Reynolds was paid a total of $140,000 a year, one quarter of what CUNY’s trustee was paid at the time. One CUNY trustee responded with a proposal to ban the chancellor from earning outside income.

Goldstein’s expanded role at the J.P. Morgan Funds

A recent report from Reuters, however, gives a sample of the kinds of duties Goldstein’s new job entails. As chair of the overall Board of Trustees for the J.P. Morgan Funds, Goldstein sits on the boards of a number of individual funds within the group. He chairs the Governance Committee of one such fund, the JPMorgan Funds, and oversees its trustee. In a recent regulatory filing within the executive compensation plan guidelines, including the two-days-a-month rule.” He did not provide details.

SKEWED FOCUS

Robert Rhoads directs UCLA’s Globalization and Higher Education Research Center. Beyond the potential for specific conflicts, he is concerned that commercial ties skew academic leaders’ focus away from “the broader vision of the university as a center for advancing deep forms of citizenship and civic engagement.”

Rhoads argues that a chancellor or president’s corporate links should trigger a demand to know what universities are getting from the deals. Without strict accountability, “the personal benefits to the individual leader seem vast,” argues Rhoads, “and leave one to wonder about the real motivation for such forms of involvement.”

Marching into the future

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TIAA-CREF drops controversial real estate project

Facing fierce protests from unions, TIAA-CREF has sold its interest in a real estate construction project at 51-41 4th Avenue in Long Island City that has become notorious for its poor working conditions and failure to pay prevailing wages and benefits. The campaign against the Queens construction “swapshop” was spearheaded by the New York District Council of Carpenters (NYDCDC) and received important support from the PSC and its national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, persuading TIAA-CREF CEO Roger Ferguson to drop support for the 47th Avenue development.

“Carwasheros” sign first union contract

On May 29, workers at the Hi-Tok Car Wash & Lube in Queens became the first group of “carwasheros” in New York City to ratify a union contract. The three-year contract provides for annual raises, a fair distribution of work hours, five paid sick days a year, unpaid leave to visit their home countries and the establishment of a grievance procedure. The carwasheros are affiliated with the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), which is working with community allies to unionize the roughly 200 car washes in New York City that have an estimated 5,000 workers, most of whom are immigrants.
Rush to implement Pathways

By PETER HOGNESS

As Spring semester came to a close, Brooklyn College’s Faculty Council condemned the college administration’s decision to eliminate the school’s foreign language requirement. The unilateral decision by the school’s provost, in the face of sharp faculty opposition, was part of the administration’s efforts to implement Pathways, CUNY’s new curriculum for general education that is scheduled to be in place this Fall.

UNTENABLE

“As implementation of Pathways moves forward, it is becoming increasingly clear how it is degrading educational standards,” said a statement from Brooklyn College’s PSC chapter. “By strictly limiting the number of hours per course and the total number of courses required for General Education, colleges are being forced to make untenable choices about what to keep and what to sacrifice.”

When Pathways critics warned that the plan would force many colleges to drop their foreign language requirements, CUNY central administration insisted this was not true. Pathways, the administration argued, gave colleges the flexibility to make their own choices within the Pathways structure: “A college could, for example, require that [students] take two semesters of foreign language,” a Pathways policy document said last year.

But since Pathways sharply cuts the total number of credits in general education, any flexibility is severely limited in practice. “The Pathways framework...require[s] that the college eliminate some of its existing requirements in order to comply with the Chancellors and Board’s grand plan,” the BC PSC statement notes.

RESTRICTED

Pathways restricts general education classes to three credits and three hours, with very few exceptions, and BC’s provost explained that this was a problem in relation to language instruction: “Some introductory language courses do not comport with the 3-credit/3-hour policy,” wrote Provost William Tra-montano, and thus any attempt to retain the college’s language requirement within Pathways would be “complex.”

BC faculty also objected to the provost’s unilateral elimination of requirements related to speech and ESL. “These are just more examples of how lo-cal administrations are overriding faculty governance in their rush to implement Pathways,” the union statement said.

At LaGuardia Community College, the school’s AA program in psychology was rejected by CUNY central administration for running afoul of Pathways rules. According to George Sussman, a professor in LaGuardia’s social science department, the problem was that an anatomy course and a statistics course required for psychology majors were included in LaGuardia’s Pathways courses in the Required Core sections on science and math. “The University objected that these were STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) courses and, therefore, could not be included in an AA curriculum,” Sussman wrote in an open letter.

This left LaGuardia’s psychology faculty with two choices: either re-shape their program as an AS degree—a complicated process that would have required halting new admissions for a year or more—or replace the existing anatomy class with a non-laboratory science course, and replace the statistics course with a less rigorous course in math.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

The episode was most troubling, Sussman wrote, as an example of the way Pathways is taking curricular design out of the hands of academic departments: “Curriculum design, once an integral part of our responsibilities, is now in the hands of administrators, who may or may not be trained in an academic discipline but answer to a politically appointed board, and the individual professors whom they pay by the task to implement their ideas of curricu-lum and give those ideas profes-sional credence,” he wrote. It was, he concluded, another reason to vote no confidence in the referendum on Pathways (see facing page).

NO CONFIDENCE

As the semester ended, more than two dozen Pathways courses failed to win the support of the College Council at Medgar Evers College (MEC). “No Pathways courses were approved by the College Council—none of them,” said Clinton Crawford, a professor of art at MEC and chair of its PSC chapter. “We had two meetings in the same month, and they were not approved either time.”

MEC’s administration may choose to submit Pathways courses to CUNY central administration, even without faculty approval, said Crawford, as has happened at many other CUNY colleges. “But the College Council has sent a definitive message: we have no con-fidence in Pathways.”

Why I voted No Confidence

Clarion spoke with a number of full-time faculty members about their vote in the referendum.

JIM TOLAN

None of the curricular changes that have been made are based on any kind of pedagogical grounding. I would be less offended if they would just acknowledge it’s about money and numbers.

If the administration really felt this was a good idea, they would have found a way to communicate with students and to discuss these issues. It’s going to dilute the quality of education at the senior colleges.

It’s going to cause us to produce students who know nothing about computer science except the misapprehensions they brought with them when they came to college, who are less able to communicate verbally, who are less able to work in a lab.

JACKIE JONES

Pathways seems to be the epitome of curriculum made by people who have never set foot in a classroom. It’s going to dilute the quality of education at the senior colleges.

It’s going to force us to produce students who know nothing about computer science except the misapprehensions they brought with them when they came to college, who are less able to communicate verbally, who are less able to work in a lab.

TAMARA MOSE BROWN

Pathways communicates that learning another language is just not that important. And I think the opposite is true.

CHARLES NEUMAN

The Pathways curriculum values science less. You need a general background in science. It’s important no matter what kind of work you go into. It goes far beyond the specific content of a given course—it teaches scientific thinking and logical thinking.

It’s bad to encourage less science. We can’t help students as much as we feel they deserve. The three-credit science courses being eliminated force students to transfer to many schools outside of the CUNY system, including SUNY colleges.

Matthew Goldstein stepping down is one big vote of no confidence in Pathways. He’s jumping ship before things hit the fan. If he believed in Pathways, he would stick around to see things hit the fan.
Big vote against Pathways

By PETER HOGNESS

In a referendum on Pathways, the CUNY administration's overhaul of general education, 92% said they have "no confidence" in the new curriculum. More than 95% of the 3,996 eligible voters took part in the referendum among full-time faculty, which was conducted by the American Arbitration Association at the request of the PSC.

There were 3,996 votes supporting a statement of no confidence; 323 votes against; and three voided ballots. The landslide result, combined with the high level of participation, means that an absolute majority of CUNY's full-time faculty has expressed its lack of confidence in the administration's new curriculum, which is scheduled to go into effect this fall.

STUNNING REBUKE

"The vote is a stunning rebuke to the Pathways curriculum and the coercive measures used to impose it," said PSC President Barbara Bowen, an associate professor of English at Queens College and the Graduate Center. "With a new interim chancellor about to take office and Trustees' Chair Benno Schmidt's term soon to expire, the moment is right to repeal and rethink Pathways."

Press coverage of the vote included articles in The New York Post, The Chronicle of Higher Education, and Inside Higher Ed. The vote was "an overwhelming thumbs-down to the controversial Pathways program," the Post reported.

"Our students deserve an education that is broad, deep and rigorous -- but Pathways undermines these goals," Alex Vitale, associate professor of sociology at Brooklyn College, told the Post. "The level of faculty opposition to Pathways is unprecedented because our students' futures are at stake."

The no-confidence referendum offered "a unique opportunity to talk to our colleagues and engage them," said Alan Feldgenb, a professor of architecture at City College and PSC chapter chair. "It was an opportunity to discuss not only the issues, but also the importance of our union and of organized resistance."

"It was indeed a wonderful organizing experience," agreed Judy Barbab, outgoing chapter chair at Queensborough Community College and a professor of academic literacy. "I spoke to and got to know many faculty I had never met before, and who had never attended a union chapter meeting. It was an exhausting, but exhilarating experience, and I am thrilled that the results were so strong."

The PSC Delegate Assembly saw debate over the structure of the referendum, with some delegates objecting to the Executive Council's decision to organize it as a vote among CUNY's full-time faculty. A motion for the vote to include part-time faculty as well as professional staff, while excluding anyone who is not a union member, failed by a vote of 50 to 15. Adjuncts, full-time faculty and professional staff were each found on both sides of the vote.

Critics argued that Pathways is a union issue and affects all members, so all union members should vote. To do so, they argued, would be exclusionary, and would perpetuate CUNY's two-tier system, while including all union members would build a more united union. Those who voted not to change the referendum said that it was a strategic decision, based on a realistic assessment of how CUNY is organized today, where the Bylaws assign responsibility for formulating policy on curriculum to the full-time faculty. When some departments and college senates have voted under pressure to approve Pathways courses, they said, management has claimed that this shows Pathways has faculty support. A no-confidence vote by a clear majority of the full-time faculty, they argued, would counter such claims.

EMPOWERING

The referendum was conducted between May 9 and May 31, and results were announced June 1. "The result of the referendum empowers us at a critical moment," Bowen wrote in a message informing members of the outcome. "Equipped with this unprecedented, we can take the campaign to a new level [and] continue the fight in the Fall."

"No one can deny that there is mass faculty opposition to Pathways in its present form," said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant, a professor at the Hunter School of Social Work, and former executive officer of CUNY's doctoral program in social welfare. "This is a call for management to begin to negotiate, and we go from here."

"The rush to implementation is deepening the problems with the Whole Pathways project," Fabricant observed, "and the rotten fruit of this process will be with us in the fall." But as students encounter the reality of Pathways and the courses are reviewed, he said, faculty will have both the opportunity and responsibility to speak up in favor of a more rigorous curriculum. "We're not only going to watch, but acting," Fabricant said. "Pathways will come under scrutiny, and it is up to all us, as a unified, vigilant faculty across the University.

92% say "no confidence"

Points of contention

Pathways lowers the number of credits that can be required as part of a CUNY college's general education plan, and it restricts almost all general education courses to three credits. As a result, say critics, Pathways means reduced foreign language study, basic science classes without lab sessions, and pressure for less class time in introductory writing courses (see tinyurl.com/lyncunjpathways-research).

"Pathways will come under scrutiny as a vote of no confidence. It's a vote of no confidence in the administration's ability to think through curriculum," said Bowen.

"This is wrong," you can't just shut off the curriculum to three credits. There is no way you can cover the same amount of work in three hours as you could in four.

"The move to open admissions, we fought so hard for the extra hour of class time with the professor and the student in languages and sciences. With these catch-all "buckets" of courses, students can avoid an entire area of study. So both the depth and the breadth of the education that our students receive will be at risk.

Pathways lowers the standards for our students. It lowers the bar. Students won't have to take sciences with a lab, or a proper math course, or any classes in the social sciences. With these catch-all "buckets" of courses, students can avoid an entire area of study. So both the depth and the breadth of the education that our students receive will be at risk.

Pat Arnow Gary's choice

Fay Rogg

Professor and former Chair, Modern Languages Dept.

BMCC

I don't believe that any educator would endorse a program that takes away an extra hour of class time with the professor and the student in languages and sciences. After the move to open admissions, we fought so hard for the extra hour of instruction to meet the needs of our students. Sadly, CUNY's motive for implementing Pathways is economic, not educational.

"Our mission at the community colleges is to do right by students who have been shortchanged by every institution. And Pathways says, "No, we won't!" They don't believe in our students. I'm incensed that they would even consider doing something like this -- we fought it tooth and nail. Even a child could tell this makes no sense. When 92% of the people say, "This is wrong," you can't just shut your eyes and go forward.

Renata Lansiquot

Associate Professor, English

Assistant Director, Honors Scholars Program City Tech

Pathways lowers the standards for our students. It lowers the bar. Students won't have to take sciences with a lab, or a proper math course, or any classes in the social sciences. With these catch-all "buckets" of courses, students can avoid an entire area of study. So both the depth and the breadth of the education that our students receive will be at risk.

Lydia Weil

Assistant Professor, Modern Languages Dept.

LaGuardia Community College

I don't buy the claim that this is going to be better for a transfer. In terms of curriculum, I think the old one was better because it was carefully chosen by faculty to prepare students well for a four-year school. Students who lack confidence in their abilities may choose the easiest course in each area, and that will harm them when they go on to senior colleges.

Most of the students I talk to about Pathways are more confused than happy. When I try to explain Pathways to them, they are confused about what they see.
In August 2013, the long-standing underfunding of adjunct health insurance at CUNY came to a head. Trustees of the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund announced that continuation of adjunct health insurance was in danger, and, unless changes were made, it would not last beyond the coming year.

The PSC responded with an energetic campaign to save adjunct health coverage, to maintain this long-standing basic benefit and put it on a firmer foundation. The campaign secured State funding for continuing this basic benefit and reached important agreements with CUNY management on ways to provide substantially the same coverage in a more sustainable framework. But despite this hard-won progress, a permanent new plan is not yet in place.

This article looks back at what has been achieved so far, and at what must still be done. Some agreements reached in the talks between the union and CUNY management will take effect in the coming months; these include additional CUNY funding for the benefit; an adjustment in eligibility rules in preparation for moving adjuncts into an existing public-worker health plan; and increased funding for the Adjunct Professional Development Fund.

LONGTERM GOAL
Achieving financially sustainable health insurance for part-time faculty at CUNY who have no other source of coverage has been a goal of the PSC’s leadership for over a decade. When adjuncts first gained health insurance at CUNY in 1986, coverage was provided through the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund and financed by a flat-rate contractual contribution from CUNY. The number of eligible adjuncts and the cost of coverage increased in the years that followed, but the University resisted union proposals to adjust the funding accordingly.

After the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund trustees declared that the fund could no longer subsidize the provision of health insurance, union members rallied, testified and protested at CUNY, insisting on secure funding to ensure a stable program. The PSC delegates made defense of adjunct health insurance a priority for this round of negotiations. Solving the crisis was seen as vital, both for adjuncts and for the financial stability of the Welfare Fund as a whole. In response, Chancellor Matthew Goldstein expressed to the CUNY Board of Trustees his desire to achieve a financially sustainable solution.

NEGOTIATIONS
With lobbying support from PSC, CUNY secured fringe benefit funding from New York State that would cover much, but not all, of the cost of adjunct health insurance beyond existing contractual contributions. The PSC and CUNY then began to negotiate the terms of an agreement to take the State and City, designed to provide adjunct coverage in a more rational, cost-effective way by including eligible adjuncts under one of the public-employee health benefit programs. Because these large public programs cover hundreds of thousands of employees, such plans are more stable and efficient than the kind of small group plan the Welfare Fund purchases for about 1,800 eligible adjuncts.

The terms of coverage and financing that the PSC and CUNY have negotiated over the past year largely replicate eligibility terms for adjuncts under the current Welfare Fund coverage. An adjunct must have worked at CUNY for at least two continuous semesters and be teaching at least six contact hours (CUNY-wide), and have access to no other source of health insurance coverage to be eligible. The plan provides individual coverage only while the adjunct maintains eligibility. (Adjuncts can buy family coverage by paying the difference between the individual and family rates.) CUNY doctoral students—even if employed as adjuncts—are eligible to receive primary health insurance coverage under the New York State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP); they are thus not eligible for CUNY’s current adjunct health insurance, and that will remain true under the new plan as well.

As part of their negotiations, the PSC and CUNY resolved a series of university-wide grievances about adjunct overloads over several semesters, primarily concerning instances where waivers were never requested, and identified sources of funding for future cost increases in the program. CUNY also agreed to make a one-time supplemental contribution of $250,000 to the Adjunct Professional Development Fund.

The talks with CUNY management were complex and had to address many details. Union negotiating team members say that CUNY proved to be a serious negotiating partner: the two sides often disagreed, but both were committed to getting it done. But the prolonged talks led some to receive additional coverage during their future coverage. The PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund trustees repeatedly extended their deadline as CUNY provided some supplemental funding to help cover the cost.

In January, CUNY and PSC took a joint proposal to New York City, which provides for eligible adjuncts to receive health insurance coverage under the New York City Health Benefits Program and supplemental health benefits (prescription drugs, dental, optical) under the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund. This is how coverage for full-time faculty is provided—though under different eligibility terms:

- Although there would be no cost to the city, a new agreement still remained out of reach. “Talks are continuing and we remain hopeful about reaching an agreement,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen at the beginning of June. “It’s a strong proposal, there is a detailed agreement between union and management, the funding is in place and it’s clearly the right thing to do.”

In order to give adjuncts a measure of security while discussions continue, the PSC and CUNY negotiated an understanding and the Welfare Fund trustees agreed to accept funding terms allowing the current Welfare Fund health insurance to continue through June 30, 2014.

ELEGIBILITY RULES
As part of the PSC-CUNY talks so far, eligibility rules were adjusted to reflect the proposed terms for covering eligible adjuncts under the City health plan. Effective with the Fall 2013 semester, non-teaching adjuncts with two semesters of service at CUNY must be working at least 15 hours per week to be eligible for health insurance coverage. A non-teaching adjunct who worked 10 or more, but less than 15 hours in the two semesters of the 2012-2013 academic year, will continue to be eligible as long as she or he works 15 or more hours per week starting Fall 2013. Adjuncts whose eligibility is achieved through a combination of teaching and non-teaching work may also need to increase their non-teaching hours.

AHEC
It is important to remember that adjuncts are part-time workers, and the most common way to aluno is to work fewer than 20 hours per week. The university has set an eligibility threshold of 15 hours per week to be eligible to receive health insurance; an adjunct who works only 14 hours per week is not eligible for health insurance. The threshold will be increased to 20 hours per week for Fall 2013.

Adjuncts who have reached the eligibility hours and are accepted into the health plan will be able to receive UI benefits for up to two years if they lose their jobs. This is how the UI benefit works: an adjunct who is laid off due to an economic downturn will be able to receive benefits for up to 26 weeks, depending on the unemployment rate. To receive UI benefits, an employee must be working at least 15 hours per week and must have worked at least 80 hours in the last 12 months.

Making the case for CUNY
Paul Washington (second from the right) of the PSC Legislative Committee is joined by CUNY students as he urges Brooklyn College President Carol Y. Marinello to support increasing public health insurance. The City budget, which helps fund CUNY community colleges, is expected to be completed in June.
New way to retire

Making a gradual departure

By JOHN TARLETON

Long-serving full-time faculty and professional staff at CUNY who are participants in TIAA-CREF or similar plans now have a new retirement option: phased retirement.

Under a three-year pilot program negotiated by the PSC and CUNY, eligible full-time faculty may take a voluntary phased retirement of one, two or three years in which they carry 50% of workload and receive 50% of pay. HOE-series employees and full-time CLTs can take a phased retirement for either six months or one year, at 80% of pay and 80% of pay. The decision to fully retire after the phase-in period is irrevocable.

CONDITIONS

To participate, faculty and staff must be enrolled in the Optional Retirement Plan (TIAA-CREF or the alternate funding vehicles with an employee option: phased retirement.

For people who can financially afford this option, this can be a good way to transition into retirement,” said Jared Herst, PSC Coordinator for Pension & Benefits. “But you need to be sure your financial picture is in order because it’s irrevocable.” If you take phased retirement, you can decide to fully retire sooner, but not later, than your original target date.

The financial aspects of phased retirement are important because, while “phasing,” employees remain active and will have access to their primary CUNY retirement annuity. In fact, retirement contributions will continue from both CUNY and employees, based on their reduced rate of pay.

Those who are phasing will have access to funds in their supplemental retirement accounts, because they are older than 59 1/2. Employees may also have access to other sources of income. Explicitly, in the language of the agreement, PSC and CUNY encourage employees to consult a financial professional and/or retirement counselor and review all aspects before making the decision to phase.

Employees on phased retirement will retain their rank and their tenure, CCE or 13.3B status until they complete the phasing period. They will also be entitled to health and life insurance and PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund benefits as full-time employees, under the same terms as full-time employees, and will have largely the same access to college facilities as before.

To be approved for phased retirement, faculty members are required to meet with their department chairs and HOEs or CLTs with their supervisors to reach a mutually agreeable configuration of their reduced work schedules. Any subsequent changes in a member’s part-time workload configuration must be approved by the department chair or supervisor.

Those taking phased retirement will continue to have access to Travia Leave and can use it in one of two ways. Travia Leave is a long-standing option that permits employees to be compensated for the partial year of phased retirement, up to a maximum of one semester, before officially retiring. Those taking phased retirement can combine it with Travia Leave by taking their Travia as a lump sum payment at the end of the phasing period or can stay on payroll for up to one semester (depending on the amount of unused sick days) at the end of the phased retirement period, at 100% pay. The combination of phased retirement and Travia leave cannot exceed three years, and requires an irrevocable choice of full retirement at the end of the phasing period.

The agreement between PSC and CUNY to establish the phased retirement program was approved April 26. Those interested in participating starting next Fall, had until May 15 to submit a notice of intent to their department chair/supervisor and a formal application had to be submitted by June 7. In the course of the negotiations, the union succeeded in gaining coverage for library and counseling faculty and for professional staff, who were not included in management’s original proposal. For BMCC Professor of Biology Edith Robbins, the initial availability of phased retirement presented a difficult choice. Robbins, 71, has taught at BMCC since 1968 and serves as the biology team leader in her school’s department of sciences where she decides on textbooks, online homework assignments and other issues related to overseeing 50 sections of biology classes per semester.

DIFFICULT CHOICES

Faculty who take phased retirement may arrange their schedule to teach full-time for one semester and be off the other – something Robbins said she would like to do in order to go on more bird-watching excursions around the world. But despite increasing frustrations with Pathways (see pages 6-7) and CUNYfirst (see pages 8-9), Robbins eventu-

 Chancellor's lucrative exit

“Emeritus” post to pay $500K

By JOHN TARLETON

The Board of Trustees has approved a retirement package for outgoing CUNY Chancellor Matthew Goldstein that will pay him a six-figure salary for nearly seven years after his retirement takes effect July 1.

The retiring chancellor will go on “study leave” for one year at his current salary of $480,000, a year take five months of paid Travia leave and then serve as chancellor emeritus for five years at an annual salary of $300,000. Goldstein will collect his chancellor emeritus salary concurrently with his CUNY pension.

The board’s resolution states that $100,000 of the chancellor emeritus salary “shall come from non-tax-levy funds.” In the past, this has meant that the funds come from the CUNY Research Foundation, with money from the RF’s “overhead” on faculty members’ research grants.

UNDERPAID

Shortly before trustees approved the plan, April 29, meeting Chair Benno Schmidt told the New York Post that board members wanted Goldstein’s send-off to be “on the generous side.” “I think he’s been underpaid as chancellor,” Schmidt said of Goldstein, whose compensation has been cut by 35% over five years after his retirement takes effect July 1.

The board’s resolution on appointment of a chancellor emeritus did not directly address why it was necessary to make this a salaried position. In response to the RF’s objections on Goldstein’s record as chancellor, saying that he has been “a true visionary.”

The board’s action comes at a time when faculty and staff have not received a raise since 2010, and students are being hit with a tuition increase of 5% over five years. Thirty-nine percent of CUNY students come from households that earn less than $20,000 per year. “It’s disgraceful,” said Bob Cermele, an associate professor of mathematics at City Tech and PSC chapter chair. “It’s horrifying that someone would take so much money from a public institution that is starved for funds.”

TREMENDOUS NEED

Gerald Meyer is a professor emeritus of history at Hostos Community College. Since Meyer’s retirement, he has regularly taught one class per semester for which he is paid as an adjunct. Meyer says that Goldstein’s retirement package is symptomatic of deeper trends in society, leading to “the collapse of the ethos of the public sector based on a concept of service and stewardship.”

In 2006, Meyer co-founded the Hope Circle of 100 Scholarships & Emergency Fund, which has raised almost $200,000 since its inception. The fund has distributed $1,000 scholarships each year to emergency grants to hundreds of students from around the world who are close to graduating but need financial assistance. “The need is tremendous,” Meyer told Clarion.

One solid foundation

About 90 CUNY Research Foundation workers and their supporters, including RF workers Roger Weldon (foreground) and Abel Quan (background), picketed May 21, outside a meeting of the foundation’s board of directors. The RF Central Office Chapter has been without a contract since January 1, and is insisting that management make a fair wage offer.
After publishing David Arnow’s op-ed on the new CUNYfirst computer system (“CUNYFirst, Users Last,” May 2013 Clarion), we asked readers to tell us their own experiences with CUNYFirst. Some of the responses are excerpted below; most of those who commented chose to remain anonymous.

Users’ criticisms of CUNYFirst are specific, widespread and growing. You can read the original article and the full range of comments it drew at psc-cuny.org/clarion/may-2013/CUNYFirst-users-last.

Entering grades for Spring 2013

At home. I tried on two separate days to access CUNYFirst, and multiple times I received my password as invalid. On Tuesday, I went to Borough of Manhattan Community College to enter grades at the Registrar’s Office. After passing through three levels of assistants in the office… the head registrar [had to] enter the system and enter the grades himself. It was a blood-pressure-raising experience! [But] it was handled most courteously by the people in the office: I only blame CUNYFirst.

If I had chosen this system, I would have been fired!

I want to thank you for not only the bold stand you took in your opinion piece in Clarion, but also your recognition of HEOs at CUNY and the toll that CF (as we call CUNYFirst) and now Pathways have taken on us. I am from a Wave 2 school and had to put in enormous hours of over-time in the year leading up to our conversion. Now that we are live, CF has slowed our progress enormously, resulting in extra hours on a routine basis. I rarely leave my office on time. I still have to put in extra hours every night to get our grades in by the final deadline. We work approximately, it’s the students who pay the price.

Converting any system is aardous task, but one usually can expect to get to a point where most things are working well. I don’t think CF will ever work well and we will have problems with it until we finally convert to something else.

I agree with the parts here about the training being inadequate at best. My colleagues who did the CF “Train the Trainer” were unprepared. You can’t learn how to read PowerPoint presentations out loud (and urged to “smile more!”). They themselves were frustrated that they were supposed to train colleagues on campus but were not given the proper training or tools to do so.

Then, in the middle of all of the CF problems, we are supposed to implement Pathways, which requires a great deal of administrative retooling in addition to its pedagogical issues. And now we are told that there will be significant changes being made in how financial aid will be delivered, also starting this fall.

How much are we, as HEOs, expected to shoulder at one time? Most of my colleagues are extremely tired, some to the point of increased illnesses. We get little recognition (except for us lucky ones with supervisees who acknowledge our hard work and dedication in the only way they can: thanks and the occasional pizza party) and rarely are eligible for merit raises or other “hard” compensation.

Again, I thank you for recognizing HEOs and the work we do to make our colleges function. I feel that the people at Central have forgotten what it is like to be on the ground at one of the colleges.

A total mess

At Hunter College [in May] a printed notice was posted… telling students that graduate registration was suspended because of “seriously ill computer hardware failure.” We rushed to another notice telling students that they were not registering correctly and while they think that they have completed registration, they really haven’t. A total mess.

CUNYFirst’s “deprovisioning” of adjunct faculty

See page 16 of the Queens College Adjunct Task Force Report for details about how CUNYFirst “deprovisioned” hundreds of adjuncts: “As the Adjunct Task Force prepared for one of its final meetings to review this report, many adjuncts at Queens College found it impossible to access the CUNYFirst system, or, if they were able to access CUNYFirst, were not accorded access to the Faculty DI, which is necessary to post grades on the CUNYFirst system. The explanation given by the Office of Converging Technologies (OCT) was that ‘CUNYFirst is the only plus adjacent accounts on June 1, 2011, because the contracts ended May 31, 2011.’ The announced deadline was May 30. Those who had supply grade rosters for the Spring 2011 semester was June 4, 2011.

Just as teaching a course begins, the professor takes attendance and ends after the class is dismissed, so too does the process begin well before the first day of classes for the semester and ends well after the last day of classes when the papers are collected. But the CUNYFirst system was programmed under the assumption that the adjunct faculty members’ relationship with Queens College was in all respects severed after midnight of the 31st day of May…

Such a terrible choice

Delegating HEO staff members have been putting in 13- to 14-hour days to try to get CUNYFirst to work, basically trying to fit a round peg into a square hole. This top of implementing Pathways ways.

The system is repeatedly ‘down.’

Even when it is working, it takes about 15 minutes or more to use it to advise a student, whereas in the past, academic advisors could obtain the information they needed from SIMs in about a minute or two. Multiple 15 minutes to 1 hour times the students on your campus and you begin to see the magnitude of the problem.

In 2011, Montclair University sued Oracle [maker of PeopleSoft, the software used by CUNYFirst] for a failed ERP [Enterprise Resource Planning system]; in fact, the Montclair situation was named one of the 10 biggest ERP failures in 2011 Computer World Magazine. Montclair claimed that due to serious mistakes and delays on the part of Oracle, the project cost over $5 million more than the original budget. Montclair also alleged that Oracle staffed the project with unprepared staff members, missed deadlines, didn’t adequately train its software users, and used a “rigged” software demonstration that falsely made it seem like some functionality was part of Oracle’s base system. This case was recently resolved [see tinyurl.com/Montclair-U-settlement for details]… The last I heard, Cambridge University was also considering suing for the same reasons.

In an older suit, Ohio’s attorney general filed a lawsuit against PeopleSoft, Inc., seeking $10 million in damages stemming from an allegedly faulty installation of the company’s ERP and student administration applications at Cleveland State University.

Cleveland State University and PeopleSoft USA, Inc., reached a $4.25 million settlement in 2005.

These are just a few lawsuits against PeopleSoft/Oracle by universities; there have been others by private corporations, municipalities and others for cost overruns, poor functionality, missed deadlines, etc…

SIMS was imperfect, but was basically responsive to the needs of each college. I’ll never understand why an investment in enhancing SIMS to make it an integrated university-wide system was not done. Just young staff member at SUNY Buffalo where they use Oracle. She described it as a nightmare, saying that the longs for the day when they used its own “homegrown” computer information system…

Duplicate records – 1

Because the formatting of staff information is different than it was in the legacy system, when we import faculty data into a separate, mission-critical database, it causes duplicate records. This has the effect of making it impossible for faculty to log in to that database and check on information relating to their students.

Duplicate records – 2

Duplicate record problems caused by CUNYFirst have exploded since the first campuses went live. I regularly have to deal with problems on the CUNY Portal and Blackboard, where students are suddenly duplicated because a campus they’ve never attended, or haven’t attended in years, has gone live on CUNYFirst and imported unchecked or incorrect data. As a result, students who have never attended a separate, mission-critical database, it causes duplicate records. This has the effect of making it impossible for faculty to log in to that database and check on information relating to their students.

Department chair perspective

As an academic department chairperson, I needed to create requisitions and manage personnel actions, appointments, etc. I was unable to do anything at all in the financials because they were not made available to me despite my notifying the VP of Administration & Finance and the VP of Academic Affairs multiple times, over months, asking... for their assistance in recr...
with CUNYfirst

The powers-that-be at CUNY should admit they made a terrible mistake with CUNYfirst and just start over.

My experience with CUNYfirst

My experience with CUNYfirst so far is exactly as the author described: it is very rigid and poorly designed (feels extremely outdated...)

I don't understand why faculty's full social security numbers are displayed in
the Personal Info Summary section. Unlike some other personal info, we cannot edit it and we don't need a reminder like that. It's useless and it's just an invitation for some Internet hacker to steal it while you are managing your classes or looking for student info. With so many identity thefts committed every day and reported in the media, it's irresponsible on the part of CUNYfirst management and Human Resources to display such info.

CUNYlast

...When you enter your grades you have no idea if they went through. Twice I had to hand-write my grades because CUNYfirst never submitted the grades.

Printing from CUNYfirst

[One user commented that when trying to print out grade reports from CUNYfirst, “all I get are bits and pieces of the web page.” That drew the following response, from another user.]

My experience is that you should be using Firefox when accessing CUNYfirst. (This can help with the problem) that when printing... at times the screen will not print correctly.

Unconfirmed

I avoid CUNYfirst as much as possible. I use it mostly to enter grades. What drives me crazy is that I never know if the grades have been accepted. There is no kind of confirmation. And why does it take so long for the grades I enter to reach the Registrar’s Office? Grades are sent to the “mail computer” only at the end of the day.

Whenever I print out my roster or grade sheet, I sorely miss having a microscope! Could anything be printed in a smaller font?

I’m glad my grades are in and the summer is over, so I won’t have to face CUNYfirst until the Fall semester begins.

A good investment?

I have my doubts.

From technophobe to technophobe

EPIC FAIL! Those words can’t be strong enough. The worst example of corporatizing ever in CUNY... Not only is it poorly designed and non-intuitive, it constantly breaks down. It is so buggy that everyone ends up spending much more time on it than the old system. The biggest frustration is that no one seems to know how to fix anything, so the same HEOS keep getting bombarded with help questions. One of our best HEOS has resigned because, after two years, she has had it and would rather retire than deal with CUNYfirst. For faculty it’s a nightmare, because instead of making it easy to register students, it’s harder. (In one case) it took five hours and five different offices to fix one small item. CUNYfirst helped secure jobs for non-HEOS, who are sweet but generally don’t have advanced answers. And so it goes... if this is representative of the conditions for teaching and learning at CUNY, then we, as an institution, are an EPIC FAIL!

Quick reference

The “Faculty Quick Reference Guide” to CUNYfirst has 76 pages. That is all.

OPINION

Peter Kuper

A good investment?

In 2010, I was chair of my department and was urged to attend [a CUNYfirst] training workshop. Of the dozen or so people who came to this event, I was the only one able to even log on to the system, and that was just due to sheer dumb luck. Even the work-

shop leader, a very savvy staffer at Hunter’s Technology Office, was unable to access the CUNYfirst account after several years of inactivity, I found that the stock options page still exists — an artifact, no doubt, of having a system that isn’t “customized,” but only “configured.”

A good investment? I have my doubts.

“Hours in lost productivity...”
Negotiations are heating up for the City Council and the mayor in advance of the June 30 deadline for next year's New York City budget. So now is the time to call and urge support for full funding for CUNY and its community colleges. Let councilmembers know that we need them to continue to support items they have funded in the past, such as the Murphy Institute, the Black Male Initiative and the Center for Puerto Rican Studies. You can send a message to cuny-cuny.org/Council-2013-budget.

To get involved in the PSC’s legislative efforts, e-mail Amanda Magalhaes at amagalhaes@pscmail.org or call 212-354-1252.

PSC chapter election results

By PETER HOGNESS

Thirteen PSC chapters held votes in April to elect chapter officers, delegates and Alternates to the DA to the union’s Delegate Assembly. Seven campuses also voted to elect representatives to the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund Advisory Council. There were contested races in the HEO Chapter, at the Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center, and at the College of Staten Island; ballots in those races were counted by the American Arbitration Association. All races in other chapters were uncontested; those ballots were counted by PSC office staff.

The Elections Committee has certified results in all the elections, except for the vote at the College of Staten Island, where the chapter election results have been challenged. The Elections Committee is reviewing the challenge, and Clarion will publish complete results in our summer issue. The PSC Delegate Assembly, at its May 16 meeting, accepted the Elections Committee’s certification report on results of the elections at other campuses.

In all, 2277 votes were cast, out of a total of 6857 ballots mailed, for an overall voter turnout of 33%.

The names of those elected follow below, with those new to their position listed in italics.

Bronx Community College EOC:
Chair, Frank Munoz

HEO Chapter:
Chair, Iris Delutro (Queens); Vice Chair, Mei Lin; Secretary, Janet Winter (John Jay); Officers-At-Large, Sherrian Grant-Fordham (York), Wayne Harewood (KCC), Karen Thomas (Bronx CC), Marc Ward (Lehman); Delegates to the DA, Anthony Andrews (York), Stephen Barrera (York), Cynthia Bink (NYCTT), Thomas Brennan (Staten Island), Arthur Ben Chitty (Queens), Jeffrey Connors (QCC), Beriks Cruz-Eusseib (Hostos), John Gallahger (BMCC), Donna Gill (Hunter), Marc Goodman (Queens), Zoraida Hernandez (Brooklyn), Nicholas Irons (Brooklyn), Steven Levine (LaGuardia), Graciano Matos (City), George Muchita (QCC), Robert Nelsen (Graduate School), Gina Nurse (Medgar Evers), Genicee PacificiElejalde (City), Anita Rivers (Bronx CC), Carrie Roberts (Brooklyn), Paul Washington (Medgar Evers), Janet Winter (John Jay), Cheryl Wu (Staten Island); Alternates to the DA, Maria Caruso (Queens), Jeff Clapp (City), Marie Desir (Graduate School), Michele Doney (John Jay), Vanessa Jennings (City), Anesma Rodriguez (Brooklyn), Andrea Vasquez (Graduate School), Vera Wekes (Medgar Evers)

Hunter Campus School:
Chair, David Towber; Vice Chair, Cristina Moore; Secretary, Sonya Glasser; Officers-At-Large, Barbara Ghassemi, Sue Monroe, Sylvia Schaimdin, Lee Weinberg

Kingsborough CC:
Chair, Rina Yarmish; Vice Chair, Michael Spear; Secretary, Caterina Pirene; Officers-At-Large, Donald Hume, Ellen Kendy, Michael Miranda, Eben Wood; Delegates to the DA, Susan Aranoff, Michael Barnhart, Scott Cally, Elizabeth Dill, Stephen Mogavero, William Rooney; Alternates to the DA, John Acosta, Stephen Armstrong II, Susan Farrell, Alfonso Garcia Osuna, Florence Schneider, PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Gordon Bassen, Anthony Dierlina

Lehman College:
Chair, Manfred Philipp, Vice Chair, Duanne Tannbaum; Secretary, Rosalind Carey; Officers-At-Large, Juan De La Cruz, David Manier, Massimo Pigliucci, Kevin Sailor; Delegates to the DA, Steven Birnbaum, Robert Farrell, Wayne Halliday, David Hyman; Alternates to the DA, Amod Choudhary, Moe Dogran, Christy Folsom, Vincent Prohaska; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Amod Choudhary, Dana Fenton

Manhattan College:
Chair, Joyce Schwartz; Vice Chair, Geoffrey Kurtz; Secretary, Kathleen Offerhollen; Officers-At-Large, Carol Bilsky-Binse, Joy Dunkley, Hayim Martin, Joanne Zaz; Delegates to the DA, Francesco Crocco, Erik Frees, Anthony Gronowicz, Craig Hutchison, Geoffrety Kurtz, Howard Meltzer, Hemalatha Navaratne, Kathleen Offerhollen, Charles Post; Alternates to the DA, Matthias Ally, Thomas Burgess, K.E. Svirsky Ford, Andrew Levy, Yolanda Medina, Benjamin Poussel; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Jane Clark, Nelson Izquierdo

Medgar Evers:
Chair, Clinton Crawford; Vice Chair, Iola Thompson; Secretary, Verna Green; Officers-At-Large, Obasanjo Awolabi, Stanley Bujay; Delegates to the DA, Obasanjo Awolabi, Stanley Bujasy; Alternate, Moses Phillips; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, James Gaynor, Kamau Chou-Tai

MEOC Chapter:
Chair, Karen Berry, Vice Chair, Ronald Pettaway; Secretary, Cauphey Gwynette Kearse, Officers-At-Large, Evelyn McCatty, Samuel Paul, Mabel Ramharack, Lawrence Williams; Alternate Delegate, Michael Hatchette

New York City College of Technology:
Chair, Robert Cornelle; Vice Chair, Carole Harris; Secretary, Teresa Tobin; Officers-At-Large, Mary Alice Brown, Stephen James, Ben Shepard, Sharon Swacker; Delegates to the DA, Katie Albany, Kyle Cuordileone, Andrew Douglas, Laurel Kallen, Renata Lissiquot, Sean MacDonald, Joel Mason, Shauana Vey; Alternates to the DA, Carole Harris, Stephen James, Patrick O’Halloran, Diana Samaroo, Gerald Van Loon; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Jacqueline Elliott, Helen Frank

Queensborough Community College:
Chair, Lana Zinger; Vice Chair, Aranzazu Borarche; Secretary, Michael Cesarano; Officers-At-Large, Susan Jacobsowite, Maria Mercedes Franco, Charles Neuman, Julian Stark; Delegates to the DA, Judith Barbanell, Michael Cesarano, David Humphries, Joel Kussai, Matthew Lau, Vartan Messier, Alicia Sinclair; Alternates to the DA, Aranzazu Borarche, Jimmy Catrone, Ellyn Feldman, Julian Stark, Jennifer Malay

Research Foundation: Chair, Anthony Dixon

Retirees Chapter:
Chair, William Friedheim; Vice Chair, Joel Berger, Secretary, Jean Weisman; Officers-At-Large, Patricia Brumwell, Francine Brewer, Judith Bronfman, Jacob Judd; Delegates to the DA, Joan Greenbaum, John Hyland, David Koteleschuck, Stephen Leberstein, Cecelia McCall, Jim Perlestein; Alternates to the DA, Miriam Balmuth, Jackie DiSalvo, Ezra Seltszer, Santiago Villafane, Robert Wurman; PSC-CUNY Welfare Advisory Council, Irwin Yellowitz

Continuity and change

15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Speak out for CUNY funding

Calls for action

By Dave Sanders

City Councilmember Tish James (center) holds the May issue of Clarion as she listens to a presentation on Pathways at a policy briefing for community leaders, organized by the PSC. The union is stepping up its efforts to educate the public about the negative impact of Pathways on students’ education. (See pages 6-7)