

Clarion

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



MAY 2016



AUSTERITY

Dept. chairs speak out

Starved of resources

PAGE 4

92% Vote **YES** for Strike Authorization

PSC members overwhelmingly voted to authorize the union's Executive Council to call a strike, if necessary. During a balloting period that took place from May 2 to 11, more than 10,000 members participated in the vote. PSC President Barbara Bowen pledged not to call a strike or work stoppage before the fall se-

mester. The 92-percent "yes" vote, Bowen said, "should provide an incentive to CUNY to put a decent economic offer on the table." Faculty and staff at CUNY have worked under an expired contract for longer than five years, and have not seen a raise for six years. **PAGE 3**

BENEFITS

City health plans get makeover

To hold down costs and keep the no-premium status of health plans for City workers, some co-payments will rise as new services with no co-pays expand. **PAGE 6**

CAMPAIGN

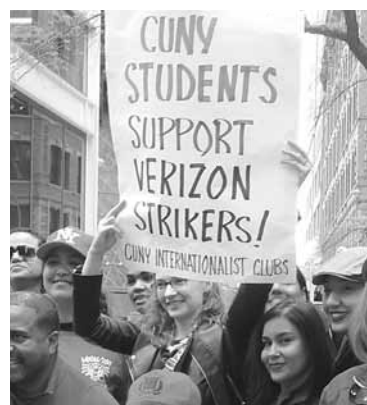
Why is Bernie still running?

A co-founder of People for Bernie argues that the socialist running for the Democratic nomination can bring real change to the party. **PAGE 2**

GREED

Verizon's union-busting scheme

The 40,000 CWA and IBEW workers on strike are challenging the company's exploitation of a changing economy in its goal to squeeze unions. **PAGE 3**



MILITARIZATION

ROTC on path to permanence?

The PSC Committee on the Militarization of CUNY uncovered documents that reveal governance issues as institutionalization looms. **PAGE 7**

NYC IN BRIEF

Theater for the people

The Working Theater, a group with a mission of presenting plays accessible and relevant to working people, is currently performing *The Block* by acclaimed playwright Dan Hoyle, known for his journalistic style. Next month, members of the PSC will host a theater party featuring a performance of the play, which is based on two years of conversations and interviews with residents of Hoyle's South Bronx neighborhood. The party will take place on Tuesday, June 7, at 7 pm, as part of the Manhattan showing of the play at Urban Stages on 259 West 30th Street. For tickets and information, contact Steve Leberstein at sleberstein@gmail.com, or Marcia Newfield at revolu@earthlink.net. For more information about the play, go to workingtheater.org/theblock.

Brooklyn College's new president

The CUNY Board of Trustees appointed Michelle J. Anderson to lead Brooklyn College as the school's 10th president. Anderson, a professor and dean at the CUNY School of Law, oversaw the growth of the law school as it strengthened its public interest mission and moved to a new state-of-the-art building in Long Island City. Having led the law school since 2006, Anderson will assume her new role on August 1. Outgoing Brooklyn College President Karen L. Gould is retiring.

Commencement lineups

A number of notable speakers will address new CUNY graduates at college commencements this presidential election year. First Lady Michelle Obama will deliver the keynote address at the City College commencement on Friday, June 3. Speakers at other CUNY commencement ceremonies include US Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro at York College, US Senator Chuck Schumer at Bronx Community College, Democratic political strategist Donna Brazile at Medgar Evers College and Arianna Huffington, cofounder and editor of the Huffington Post, at Hunter College.

—Shomial Ahmad

Corrections

In the April issue of *Clarion*, the name of Travis Sweatte, member of the PSC chapter at the CUNY Graduate Center, was misspelled at the end of the page 7 story, "41 arrested in CUNY funding protest outside gov's office."

On page 8 of the April issue, the page heading, PSC BUDGET, was incorrect. It should have read: PSC AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT. In addition, the statement was inappropriately abridged, inadvertently omitting the auditor's summary. The full report, including the auditor's comments, may be viewed at psc-cuny.org/PSC-budget-FY2015.



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

Why is Bernie still in the race? He's not done winning

● Bernie Sanders might not win the Democratic nomination this year. But he has successfully ridden a wave of insurgent populism not seen in decades. Progressive goals like free college, universal health care and an end to fracking have taken center stage. And thousands of supporters are rolling up their sleeves and getting ready for what comes next.

1. While the odds have always been against him, there's a lot he can do by running in all 50 states and bringing as many delegates as possible to the DNC in Philadelphia.

2. With 40 percent of the delegates, his representatives can demand floor votes at the DNC. These can be over policies or procedures – for example, on proposals to eliminate superdelegates.

3. With 25 percent of the delegates, Team Bernie can have a 'minority report' included in the of-

ficial Democratic Platform, offering an alternative for Bernie-crats to rally around.

4. A new political generation has been born in the Sanders campaign. Hundreds of new grassroots groups are active around the country to build power for Bernie's agenda.

Continued enthusiasm from his supporters will be channeled to down-ballot races, helping Democrats win where support for Sanders was strong.

Charles Lenchner,
Murphy Institute/SPS

Editor's note: the writer is a cofounder of *People for Bernie*

CUNY and the Cuomo legacy

● In the mid-1990s when I served as chair of the University Faculty Senate, it became clear that Governor

Mario Cuomo's concern for CUNY was so far on the back burner that it fell off the stove.

Clearly, there are differences with the Cuomo who currently occupies the governor's mansion. For one, Andrew Cuomo's father was not perpetually trying to upend the mayor of New York City. But as far as lack of interest in CUNY – if not outright hostility – the inheritance seems unbroken. The two clearly differ in the modes of expression of their anti-CUNY postures: benign neglect versus open warfare.

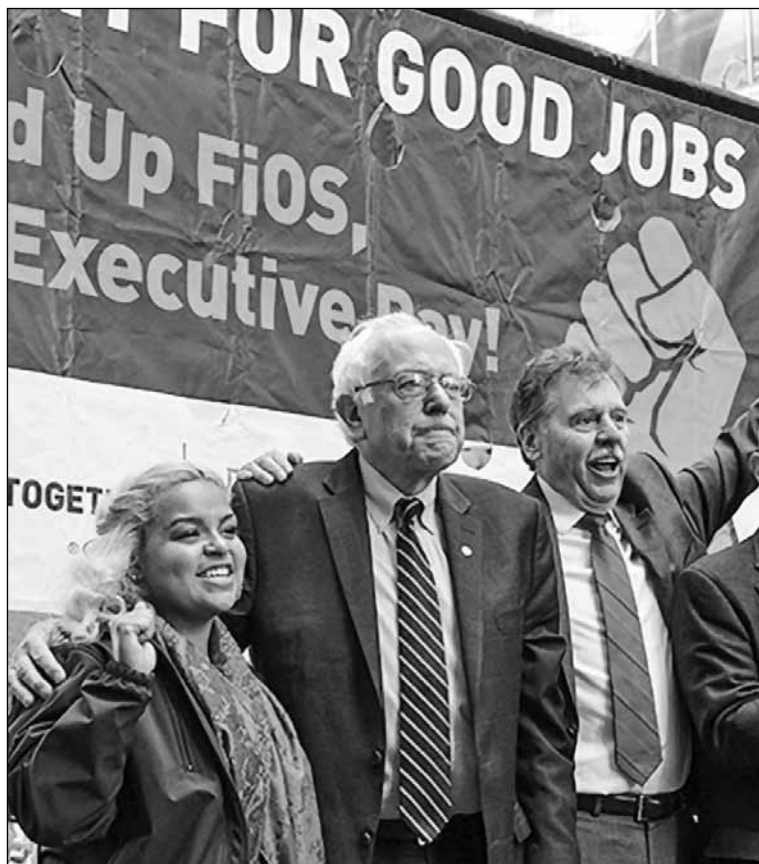
Andrew Cuomo has made trustee appointments – including a new board chair who happened to be the current mayor's opponent in the last election. Surprise? The incumbent Cuomo asserts that CUNY misuses its budget (too much devoted to administration), and he has announced that an investigator will be appointed to examine the numbers. Already the chancellery has rounded up data to show that our administration is

leaner than others, perhaps even than SUNY's. That assertion is possibly accurate regarding the central offices, but I have my doubts.

As much as I am furious at the current Cuomo, who has been blocking union members from their fair contract increases since 2010, and I certainly do not want some Albany-based time-and-motion efficiency expert redoing CUNY, I think faculty should take up this issue. A little historical analysis of the immediate past and present on each campus might be revealing.

Just as faculty need to reclaim control of the curriculum and create general education that truly educates, they also need to study the size and expansion of campus administrations.

Sandi E. Cooper
Professor Emerita
College of Staten Island and
The Graduate Center
Former Chair, University
Faculty Senate



Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, flanked by activist Bianca Cunningham and CWA District 1 VP Dennis Trainor, at an April 13 rally of striking Verizon workers.

In Memoriam: Ezra Seltzer

By IRWIN YELLOWITZ

Ezra Seltzer, a longtime PSC activist and leader of CUNY's college laboratory technicians, died on February 28, 2016.

A major spokesman for improving the status and promotional opportunities of CLTs, Seltzer consistently asserted their professionalism. He often said that the PSC was a successful union because it represented all faculty and academic staff at CUNY in equal measure. He expected all members and leaders of PSC to support the rights and needs of CLTs, and, reciprocally, CLTs were to be strong advocates of the agenda of other faculty and staff.

Starting in the 1960s and continuing until his death, Seltzer was involved with the leadership of faculty and staff in CUNY, relentlessly arguing for a union built

on the unity of all its members. His influence within the PSC was based not only on advocacy, but on action year after year in support of this principle. He was part of the Legislative Conference, one of the predecessor organizations of the PSC.

A CLT LEADER

After the merger of the Legislative Conference and the United Federation of College Teachers in 1972 to create the PSC, Seltzer worked closely with Harold Wilson, the leader of the CLT Chapter. In the 1980s, when Wilson retired, Seltzer was elected chair of the CLT Chapter, and he led the chapter for over a decade. On retiring, Seltzer became active in the leadership of the Retirees Chapter, continuing an unbroken period of service and leadership that spanned more than 50 years.

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92% vote yes in strong turnout

By CLARION STAFF

A strike authorization vote called by the PSC Executive Council concluded on May 11 with the “yes” quotient weighing in at a resounding 92 percent. PSC President Barbara Bowen has pledged that no job action would take place before the fall semester, and she reiterated her hope that the union’s contract with CUNY – which expired longer than five years ago – would be settled before then.

“PSC members – by an astounding majority – have authorized the union leadership to initiate a strike,” said Bowen. “That has not happened in this union in 43 years. It should provide an incentive to CUNY to put a decent economic offer on the table – without further delay. A 92 percent vote demonstrates that the CUNY faculty and staff are willing to fight for the working conditions we deserve and the learning conditions our students deserve.”

BARGAINING CONTINUES

“The union’s goal is to reach a fair contract without needing to strike, but CUNY’s substandard pay and conditions are endangering the university’s core mission of teaching, learning and research,” Bowen continued. “The union hopes to build on the growing public and legislative support for funding our contract, and we will do our utmost to reach an agreement through negotiations. But after six years without a raise, many of us are struggling to keep up with the cost of living for ourselves and alarmed at the threat to academic quality at CUNY.”

State-supervised mediation between the PSC and CUNY began on March 8, after CUNY declared an impasse in contract negotiations,

Green light for possible strike

refusing to respond to the PSC’s counterproposal to an economic offer described by Bowen as “insulting” and “inadequate.” (The total offer, including back pay for all of the years of no raises, amounted to 6 percent. It was made on the day the union held a disruptive action outside CUNY headquarters that ended with the arrests of 52 members.)

Any strike or work stoppage by the PSC would violate the New York State Taylor Law, which forbids strikes by public employees.

On October 15, Bowen announced the leadership’s decision to call a strike authorization vote, and PSC chapters began organizing. Union-wide actions continued apace, with a literary reading against austerity taking place in the Cooper Union’s Great Hall, a disruptive action outside Governor Andrew Cuo-

mo’s Midtown office that resulted in 41 arrests, and rallies supported by the CUNY Rising alliance. Throughout the escalated contract campaign, the PSC has had the support of the city’s labor unions.

As voting began earlier this month, members stepped up activities for turning out the vote, both at PSC offices and at CUNY campuses. The organizing work alone added to the union’s strength. At The Graduate Center, chapter members crafted “voting booths” where members could cast their votes online. With the vote commencing the week of a significant Mexican holiday, the Hostos chapter brought a mariachi band to campus for a Cinco de Mayo celebration at which many members signaled their commitment to voting.

Votes were tallied on May 12 by the American Arbitration Association at its Manhattan offices.



During the strike authorization voting period, Jacqueline Elliot and Alan Pearlman, college laboratory technicians and members of the PSC Executive Council, talk to union members, reminding them to cast their ballots.



While a mariachi band played, Emelyn Tapaoan, an adjunct lecturer at Hostos Community College, showed her support for strike authorization during a chapter event held on Cinco de Mayo.



The PSC chapter at The Graduate Center constructed and staffed voting booths where union members could cast their ballots online.

Verizon’s union-busting scheme

By ADELE M. STAN

On April 13, some 40,000 Verizon workers walked off the job, eight months after the expiration of contracts between the company and two unions, the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). As *Clarion* went to press more than a month into the strike US Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez called all parties back to the negotiating table for a round of discussions that began on May 17.

But beyond a settlement of salary and benefits demands, at issue is the broader question of how corporations are leveraging globalization and the reshaping of the US economy to squeeze unions out of the workplace.

Verizon is split into two parts: The wireless/cell phone business is treated by the company as an entity that is separate from the rest of the company’s services and products, which include legacy landline phones and the Fios fiber-optic network, which is used for providing internet, television and telephone landline service. By keeping the newer cellular business apart from the company’s other components, Verizon executives have been able to keep unions from organizing the fastest-growing and most profitable piece of the business. Union leaders say that workers on the wireless side have been intimidated by the company, and a card-check agreement reached in 2011 proved fruitless because by the time that contract was settled there was no time left to organize a campaign before the agreement expired.

For Keisha Sanders, a unionized temporary employee of Verizon, that’s the number one concern that brought her to a rally in support of

Verizon strikers that took place in Lower Manhattan on May 5. “They’re squeezing out the wireless [side] from unionizing,” she said. After that, she named the company’s insistence that it be permitted to move workers anywhere within the Verizon footprint for as long as two months at a time – a demand the company has since partly walked back. “If you tell me tomorrow that I have to travel to

Using globalization to squeeze out unions

Virginia, where do I find childcare?” she asked.

In the meantime, the unionized part of the Verizon workforce is experiencing a loss in job security as the company

moves call centers to states with anti-labor laws (so-called “right-to-work” states), and drags its feet at expanding its Fios fiber-optic network – sometimes in contradiction of promises it made to local governments. In New York City, Verizon had agreed to make Fios available to every household by the end of June 2014. But as of March, one-third of New York households still had no access to the network, according to *Crain’s New York Business*. The workers who would be laying that fiber-optic cable are union members.

GOOD JOBS

“It’s affecting us, but it’s affecting the communities that need access to high-speed internet,” said Rich Corrigan, a Verizon installation and repair technician on strike with CWA Local 1101. “It’s impacting society in general, really,” Corrigan told *Clarion* during the union rally in Lower Manhattan, especially, he said, in low-income areas. “Internet is now the new lifeblood of the country” – a utility, he added, much as the hard-wired phone line was in the past.

The day before the unions were set to go on strike, the company announced

Continued on page 6

The age of disinvestment through the eyes of department chairs

If you want to know how disinvestment in public higher education affects the lives of faculty, staff and students, ask a department chair. Tasked with facilitating the professional development of faculty members, ensuring that students receive the quality education they've been promised, supervising the work of staff members and dealing with the logistical and scheduling issues of running their underfunded departments, these educational professionals see and cope with it all. Many continue teaching even as they take on the ever-increasing demands of running their departments.

The chairs featured here shared some of their daily experiences and challenges with *Clarion*. While their colleges each face challenges unique to that institution, a common thread emerged from these testimonials: concerns over recruiting and retaining the kind of high-performing faculty that the public university of one of the world's greatest cities should have.

SARAH E. CHINN English Hunter College

I've been chair of the English Department at Hunter for almost two years. We feel the austerity policies in various ways, most notably in terms of staffing at every level. Enrollment in our major has grown about 10 percent in the past six years, but the numbers of full-time faculty are dwindling. We have around 1,150 students in the major, and as of the next academic year we'll have 41 full-timers. Our students can go through our major without ever taking a class from a full-time faculty member.

None of the four lines that are empty due to retirements that have taken place since 2010 have been filled, and we're losing two additional faculty members who are moving to better-paying jobs at state universities with less teaching and more resources when they leave to be with academic spouses. The two hires we've made in the past five years have been to replace a faculty member who died unexpectedly and another who, you guessed it, moved to a better-resourced research university.

Our department office is staffed wholly by part-time college assistants; our department higher education officer (HEO) spends all of his time coordinating more than 150 adjuncts, dealing with scheduling, room assignments, and the day-to-day logistics of running a large department. Ultimately, the

Increasing workload with less support



Mary Ann Biehl, chair of the Advertising Design and Graphic Arts Department at City Tech, meets with design student Miles Chandler.

people who suffer the most from these trying circumstances are our students. As I write this, the department office is empty because the college assistant scheduled to work this afternoon is taking a sick day, and I'm fielding queries from the students who come by.

Hunter is supposed to be a liberal arts college, but it's more like a *neo-liberal* college, compromising the meaning of the education we provide through cutting costs, casualizing labor and expecting all of us to do a lot more with a hell of a lot less.

CAROLINA BANK MUÑOZ Sociology Brooklyn College

The daily life of a department chair increasingly adds up to putting out fires and attending meetings – in addition, of course, to trying to provide high-quality instruction to our students in both the courses we teach as individuals, and those taught by the members of our departments. Unfortunately, this leaves little time for thinking about the future of the department, for finding the vision to build our department in a creative way. In other words, I don't get to do what a chair should really do.

For example, one day during the first week of the Spring semester, I arrived at the office at 8:30 am and answered emails for a half hour before a junior faculty member came running into my office announcing

there was mouse excrement on her desk and a dead mouse in her trash can. "Gross," I said, and called the Facilities Department to deal with the immediate problem. Then three faculty members came to me to ask for help resolving problems with the classrooms they were assigned: one was too small for the number of students, another too noisy, and in yet another, the technology wasn't working. Next on the agenda? Three meetings. By the time I got back to the office, it was 2 pm and work was piled high. That would all have to wait because I needed to be available for office hours and then go teach my class. I left the office at 5 pm, picked up my kid from school and went home. After he went to sleep, I continued putting out department-related fires via email from 8:30 to 11 pm.

Even in a department with young, competent, energetic and highly motivated faculty, morale is at an all-time low. Furthermore, working six years without a contract means that several faculty members in my department will be on the job market in the fall. They don't want to leave, but they simply cannot afford to live in New York City without a raise. Our working conditions are reaching the point of being unbearable. We have excellent teachers in our department, but the heavy teaching load, rising expectations of research productivity and demands for service from faculty make CUNY a difficult place to work. Why do we put up with all of this? A commitment

to CUNY's mission: serving first-generation college students, students of color, immigrant students and working-class students. Every day this mission is being eroded by Governor Andrew Cuomo's austerity budget.

SUSAN A. FARRELL Behavioral Sciences and Human Services Kingsborough Community College

The stress of dealing with the personal financial issues faced by faculty in my department – in addition to the underfunding of programs in which these teaching professionals eagerly take part – affects me every

day. I feel this quite often when newer members of my department come in and ask me how they can work for so little pay and still maintain their high level of commitment to CUNY. They look for grants and other ways to support themselves, but those pursuits ultimately take time away from the classroom and the students.

Insufficient funding of CUNY also affects workload. Here at KCC, as well as at other community colleges, faculty struggle to teach 27, do service on committees and continue to do their research and publish. Even with the release time of one course for new faculty, I see my faculty carrying a burden for which they are poorly compensated. The problems are compounded by take-backs in even the small amounts of money paid for those teaching in the Learning Communities program, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and honors courses, all of which require a lot of preparation and meeting times outside the classroom. That so many faculty do engage in these nationally recognized innovations illustrates their commitment and desire to serve our students, our college and our university. The greatest impact of not having a raise in over six years is on our newer faculty, often younger faculty, who are struggling to pay off student loans, find and keep affordable housing, and start families. A contract and a decent salary increase is what they – and all of us at CUNY – more than deserve.

ELENA FRANGAKIS-SYRETT History Queens College

It has been a difficult year for all. It has been so for our students and faculty in the History Department, full-time and part-time members, as well as the office staff. The principal



Sarah E. Chinn, chair of the English Department at Hunter College, says in the past few years student enrollment has gone up in her department while the number of full-time faculty has decreased.

'It's more like a neoliberal college.'

Lindsay Beyerstein

Lindsay Beyerstein

rough irs

reason for this is the ongoing tension between members of the political leadership of New York City and State that, earlier this year, posed a major state budget cut threat that could have resulted in the closure of no fewer than five units of the City University of New York – each of the size of Queens College. This was certainly not a great backdrop against which to teach, to inspire and to let your students dream and develop intellectually as any learning institution should do. Helping our students believe in themselves, in society around them and in the power of education and fairness were not messages we could impart to them without risking being untruthful as to the dire crisis under which our college and every department functioned. With the academic year coming to a close, and the New York State budget nearly resolved in a way that avoids the most dire consequences, a budget cut has nevertheless taken place, leaving the coming year to loom as one even more difficult than the one through which we have just passed.

The result has been uncertainty and an increase in our workload. As department chair, I have had to schedule and reschedule courses to meet the needs of our students and to respect the loyalty and ongoing commitment of our part-time faculty. I have also had to ask more from our full-time faculty as they begin new projects for our students with fewer resources than they need, but with the firm belief that students should not be shortchanged. Regardless of the hardship, our demoralized faculty members have stepped up to the task. However, if the contract remains unresolved, there will come a point at which the feeling that no one cares or respects our efforts, dedication, extra work and experience permeates all ranks. Such a dispiriting message could render this institution – a treasure trove of talent for New York City and State – completely unworkable. I hope we do not get there.

KEVIN R. FOSTER
Economics and Business
Colin Powell School for Civic and
Global Leadership
The City College of New York

As a department chair, one of my most urgent challenges is the way in which the under-resourcing of CUNY affects our ability to recruit and retain the best faculty to serve our students.

Compare market salaries to the CUNY scale for both economics and business faculty. The *American Economic Review* reports average salaries. For institutions



After class, Nikolaos Apostolakis, chair of the Mathematics and Computer Science Department at BCC, works with student Ibrahima Doumbia on math concepts.

such as ours that grant a Masters of Arts degree, the national average salary for a full professor is \$122,000; for associate, \$99,500; for assistant, \$88,500. The article also notes a teaching load of 4.3 courses per year and over \$10,000 for research support. For management faculty, the market salary is even higher. According to the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the average salary for full professors is over \$160,000; for associates \$129,000; and for new PhDs \$125,000. Compare that with CUNY: in each rank, the very top of CUNY's salary scale is below the national average; note that national average does not include differences in local costs of living. In addition, CUNY demands a much higher teaching load and much less research support. It would be helpful to hear from colleagues chairing other departments how the CUNY salary scale compares with the norms listed by professional societies in their respective disciplines. When businesspeople defend CEO salaries, they always say, "You get what you pay for." Given the current circumstances, how does CUNY expect to recruit the quality faculty our students deserve?

HOLLIS F. GLASER
Speech, Communications and
Theatre Arts
Borough of Manhattan
Community College

My department has 35 full-time faculty and two majors (one in communication studies, one in theater), each with more than 400 students. In addition, we offer about 180 sections of our basic public speaking class every semester, serving 5,000 students. I can attest to two big problems with the lack of proper funding for our department, both having to do with our faculty.

The first is it is very difficult to

recruit qualified faculty from other parts of the country. We had two people in recent years decline our job offers, either because of the salary or the lack of financial support for their work. One candidate was in the very final phase of the process. After he got through our department interview, he met with the provost. Once she offered him the job, he asked to talk to me before deciding. Every one of his questions was about money. Can we help him with his move? No. Is there faculty housing? No. Do we help him find housing? No. Candidates from elsewhere know

Difficulty in retaining and recruiting faculty

how difficult and expensive New York City is, and they need a lot of support with their move and with their expenses.

The second is watching my faculty struggle to find a suitable place to live on their salaries. One of my tenured faculty members wanted to purchase a condominium or co-op for around \$350,000. That's a lot of money. Anywhere else, it would be more than adequate to purchase a modest place. But she couldn't find a one-bedroom that was clean, in a decent neighborhood and relatively close to school. We work in one of the most expensive neighborhoods in the world, Tribeca. The closest neighborhoods, including those in



Carolina Bank Muñoz, chair of the Sociology Department at Brooklyn College, discusses a final paper with student Kiara Santiago.

Brooklyn, are also very expensive. CUNY should be supporting our faculty so that we can work and live somewhere in this city comfortably.

MARY ANN BIEHL
Advertising Design and Graphic
Arts
New York City College of
Technology

Serving as chair of my department at City Tech for the past seven years has been the most rewarding experience of my professional career. It has also been the most challenging. I've been proud to work with my colleagues as we prepare our student for careers in New York City's competitive creative economy. However, our ongoing ability to do so is compromised by the current financial situation. In our discipline it is particularly hard to hire and retain faculty due to CUNY's low salaries. The ever-increasing administrative demands as well as the current workload pull faculty in so many directions, ultimately negatively impacting our students, who deserve the best educational experience we can offer them.

NIKOLAOS APOSTOLAKIS
Mathematics and Computer
Science
Bronx Community College

As department chair, the most important aspects of my job include making sure that our department provides the best education to our students, and helping faculty to realize their potential by paving the way for them to advance their scholarship and bring new ideas to the classroom. Unfortunately, the most important part of my job is something I have very little time to do because I'm always spending my time completing more and more paperwork and dealing with bureaucracy.

At Bronx Community College, we have great, dedicated faculty members, but how long can I expect to keep them in one of the world's most expensive cities when a starting salary for a full-time faculty member can be as low as \$45,000? (Average starting salaries at BCC are the lowest in the CUNY system.)

I'm not given the resources I need to adequately support our students – especially in terms of tutoring. Each time we request a tutor, we have to certify that this is an actual need. Our students come to us from underfunded public high schools and often they're returning to school as adults while supporting their own families. They're not well-prepared for the study of mathematics, but they want to learn.

Instead of having a consistent system for dealing with these concerns, every few years, we're handed a new remediation plan that we're told will solve everything. And it is all expected to happen without the appropriate support.

Verizon's union-busting scheme

Continued from page 3

nounced a \$300 million deal to bring Fios to Boston.

"The strike is fundamentally about whether there are going to be any jobs – good jobs – in America," Bob Master, political director for CWA District 1, told *Clarion*. And it's not as if Verizon shareholders would suffer terribly were the wireless side to unionize. "Verizon has made \$1.5 billion a month in profits every month for 15 straight months," Master said.

In addition to its astronomical level of profit, Verizon enjoys another huge cash advantage: It pays no federal corporate income tax. In fact, according to a report by Americans for Tax Fairness, Verizon actually *made* money with its last tax filing;

researchers found that when Verizon's actual tax rate was calculated it was in the negative: -2.8 percent.

"It's long been known that the same companies that are hostile when they deal with their employees are also going to be avaricious with their taxes [and] toward their treatment of consumers," said Lawrence Mishel, co-chair of Americans For Tax Fairness and president of the Economic Policy Institute, in a phone interview with *Clarion* conducted from his Washington, D.C. office.

UNION SOLIDARITY

PSC members have been joining the picket lines set up by IBEW and CWA outside Verizon Wireless stores, and the Graduate Center chapter has "adopted" the picket

line outside the store at 34th Street and Broadway, picketing Monday and Wednesday evening each week "until the Verizon workers win," according to an email sent to chapter members on May 13. (See the "15-minute activist" on page 8 for details on how you may show solidarity with Verizon strikers.)

Verizon workers have returned the favor. At a PSC rally organized by the College of Staten Island chapter to demand state funding for a fair settlement of the union's long-expired contract, Verizon strikers from CWA Local 1102 turned out. Patrick Youngkin, a Verizon lineman, told the *Staten Island Advance*: "Unions are few and far between. If we don't all stand together, we're done."



PSC activists David Unger, Padraig O'Donoghue and Irene Garcia-Mathes of the Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies/School of Professional Studies join Verizon strikers on a Midtown picket line.

Managing changes to your health plan

This is the second installment of a two-part series documenting new requirements in NYC health plans.

By LARRY MORGAN

If you receive health insurance through the New York City Employee Benefits Program, you should have recently found in your mailbox an announcement of changes to the city's two basic plans, the Group Health Incorporated Comprehensive Benefits Plan (GHI-CBP) and the Health Insurance Plan Health Maintenance Organization (HIP HMO), both of which are administered by EmblemHealth. These include a revised co-payment structure under which some new services will be available with no co-payments, while the co-payments for some existing services will be increased. The changes apply to workers under either of these two city plans, and are designed to emphasize primary care and reduce the city's costs by providing alternatives to emergency room and urgent care visits. To get the best value from your plan, you'll want to carefully review these revisions, summarized below. All of the changes begin July 1, 2016.

GHI-CBP

GHI-CBP coverage, in which 72 percent of PSC members at CUNY participate, has no premium charge to the employee for the basic plan; the city unions have fought hard to keep the most popular plans free of payroll deductions. GHI's participating physicians charge patients a prescribed co-payment per visit or service.

As of July 1, the GHI-CBP program will provide in-network preventive services with no co-payments for routine physicals, immunizations, colonoscopies and mammograms.

Co-payments are eliminated for office visits to a new tier of GHI primary care doctors and specialists who are members of AdvantageCare Physicians (ACP) – a

How to get the best value

multi-specialty practice. The list of preventive services and ACP physicians and facilities is available at emblemhealth.com/city.

GHI-CBP's longtime system of in-network providers (who are not part of the new ACP service) is still in place. Members who visit doctors who are part of the GHI network but

YOUR BENEFITS

not part of the AdvantageCare system will see no change to the current \$15 charge for a visit to a standard in-network primary care provider.

The co-payment for a standard in-network specialty doctor will increase from \$15 per visit to \$30. (Remember, there are specialists available through the ACP practice from whom you can receive in-office treatment and consultation for no co-payment.) There will also be increases to the co-payments for the following GHI network services – regardless of whether ordered by an ACP provider, a standard in-network provider or an out-of-network provider:

- Diagnostic lab tests increase from \$15 to \$20.
- Physical therapy increases from \$15 per visit to \$20.
- Radiology and high-tech scans increase from \$15 per test to \$50.

The most significant GHI co-payment increases are for outpatient urgent care and emergency room care. Co-payments for a participating urgent care center will increase to \$50, up from \$15, and co-payments for hospital emergency room visits will increase to \$150, up from \$50, to discourage inappropriate use of these higher-cost services. The co-payment is waived if the patient is admitted to the hospital from the emergency room.

For hospital coverage, the GHI plan partners with Empire Blue Cross.

The Affordable Care Act mandates a maximum out-of-pocket (MOOP) payment limit per year, which limits total coinsurance payments and deductibles that a member can be charged each year, but does not apply to charges for out-of-network doctors in excess of the GHI allowances. In other words, there is a cap on members' co-payments and deductibles for in-network medical services.

The GHI medical MOOP is \$4,350 (up to a combined maximum of \$8,700 for a family). The Blue Cross hospital MOOP is \$2,500 (up to a combined maximum of \$5,000 for a family). If a MOOP is reached during a given year, no further co-pays are charged until the following year. However, payments to out-of-network doctors over and above the GHI or Blue Cross allowance for a particular service do not apply to the MOOP total.

HIP HMO

The HIP HMO, through which 20 percent of PSC members at CUNY get their health care, also has no premium charge for the basic plan. It does not, however, reimburse for the cost of out-of-network services, except for legitimate emergency care. For the very first time, HIP will draw a distinction within their own Prime Network between "preferred" providers and all other in-network providers. If a preferred primary care provider is selected, all primary care visits – as well as visits to specialists – will continue with no co-payment. But if the HIP subscriber chooses to visit an in-network provider who is not on the Prime Network roster, a \$10 co-payment will apply to all primary and specialty visits.

The list of participating and preferred physicians is available at emblemhealth.com/city.

DRUG BENEFIT EXPANSION

Most prescription drug needs for members at CUNY are handled

by the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund, now administered through CVS Caremark.

Longtime exceptions include diabetic medicines that by New York State mandate are provided through your basic health insurance (GHI-CBP or HIP HMO), as well as injectable and chemotherapy drugs, which come under the city-wide PICA program.

Effective July 1, there will be additional exceptions: GHI-CBP members will be able to receive certain preventive medications, including contraceptives, mandated by the Affordable Care Act to be provided at no co-payment. This change does *not* extend to HIP HMO members or enrollees with other insurers of the New York City Employee Benefits Program.

Those covered under the GHI-CBP basic health insurance will, starting July 1, receive contraceptives prescribed by their doctors through GHI, instead of through the PSC-CUNY Welfare Fund. A new card will be issued to make this clear. This is true, as well, of several other categories of preventive prescription medicines, such as prescribed preparations for colonoscopies. A full list of the ACA-compliant drugs is expected to be available soon at emblemhealth.com/city.

Because of the potential for confusion while these changes take place, members might want to have on hand all three cards (the Welfare Fund's CVS/Caremark card, as well as your cards for GHI and PICA) when filling a prescription.

HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

The New York City Employee Benefits Program is offering special rates for Weight Watchers, one of the most respected programs in the diet field. All employees covered through the city plan can pay a discounted monthly meeting fee of \$30 and additionally receive a subsidy that would reduce that already discounted fee by half (to

\$15). Covered employees can enjoy discounted monthly pricing on the online version of Weight Watchers for \$14 (with the subsidy, the fee comes down to \$7 a month). Covered dependents can also enjoy the reduced pricing on either the meetings or online program but are not eligible for the subsidy.

Meetings are available in most communities. Programs may be brought to workplaces where members demonstrate sufficient interest. You may want to check with your benefits officer to see if a workplace Weight Watchers program is feasible for you and your colleagues.

In addition to this program, the city has been sponsoring free flu shot programs for several years.

BETTER HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Two programs are being developed to improve access to health care: a telemetric system and an appointment system that accommodates city employees and retirees.

Amwell is a service that allows eligible members access to a physician over the phone or via video interface 24 hours a day. The co-payment is \$15, and members who have Skype or FaceTime capabilities can even have a (limited) visual examination. Clearly the service is not intended as an alternative to good primary care visits, but it can help determine what level of care is needed.

Zocdoc is an online service that can be used to make an appointment among a wide variety of local physicians. It's easily sorted by location, specialty and earliest available appointment. For those who receive their health care through the NYC Employee Benefits program, a customized Zocdoc service will be made available to identify providers by basic insurance network participation. There is no charge for the Zocdoc service.

Each of these programs has an app available for your smartphone, and more information may be available through campus benefits offices.

ROTC poised to become permanent at CUNY

By SHOMIAL AHMAD

After a hiatus of nearly 25 years, the military's college-based officer training curriculum returned to CUNY three years ago as a pilot program. Now the Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps – commonly known by the acronyms ROTC or SROTC – is poised to gain a permanent foothold at CUNY.

At the end of May, the pilot program is set to expire and, according to Rishi Raj, ROTC program director at City College of New York, it is set to be made permanent by the U.S. Army Cadet Command.

"It's similar to an accreditation process," Raj said of the pilot during a telephone interview with *Clarion*, explaining that, in its initial stage at a given campus, the program is evaluated as it grows. After it meets certain benchmarks, he said, the command decides whether to make it permanent. In September 2012, the college's Faculty Senate approved "the establishment of an ROTC center at the City College of New York" in order to initially accommodate the program, but it appears to have had little, if any, input in the decision to make the program permanent. (Raj was chair of the college's Faculty Senate when the resolution passed.)

A CENTRALIZED PLAN

The City College program, if approved by the Army, would become a host program – a potential anchor for new satellite programs at other CUNY senior colleges that may be added to the SROTC program by amending or updating the existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the US Army, City College and CUNY. The memorandum that established CUNY's SROTC pilot program was obtained by the PSC's Committee on the Militarization of CUNY through an open records request. Other documents turned over as a result of that request revealed the existence of a CUNY ROTC working group that includes high-ranking CUNY officials, including Frederick P. Schaffer, general counsel and senior vice chancellor for legal affairs, and Michael Arena, director of communications and marketing, as well as Juana Reina, vice president of student affairs at City College, and Panayiotis Meleties, then-dean of academic affairs at York College, working to bring ROTC to CUNY.

"It was mostly like it was a done deal, and there was no debate. It was centralized," Glenn Kissack told *Clarion*. Kissack, a member of the PSC Committee on the Militarization of CUNY, reviewed the hundreds of pages of documents yielded by the open records request. The PSC opposes the reestablishment of ROTC at CUNY. On May 29, 2014, the union's delegate assembly passed a resolution titled "Against the Institutionalization of ROTC at CUNY," stating that the program is not in the best interests of stu-

Pilot program likely to pass

dents, and asserting that the means by which the program was established sidestepped the normal governance process (see tinyurl.com/PSC-ROTC-resolution). "There's no engagement at all with any of the PSC concerns regarding curriculum, and no provision for faculty input on curriculum or hiring," Kissack said.

On May 21, 2013 – the day the memo went into effect – CUNY officials and top Army brass, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell, an alumnus of City College's earlier ROTC program who went on to serve as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, assembled in City College's Great Hall to welcome the return of ROTC to CUNY. In what *The New York Times* described as "a scene reminiscent of an armistice ceremony," CUNY's then-Chancellor Matthew Goldstein, Major General Jefforey A. Smith and City College President Lisa Staiano-Coico signed documents with "ceremonial pens as 14 cadets stood behind them in formation."

The memorandum outlines the Army's requirements for a permanent program, which include the establishment of a Department of Military Science and a chair for the department who would be directly supervised by a committee appointed by Staiano-Coico. Final authority in instruction, per the memo, is to be "vested" in Cadet Command. The role of faculty governance in establishing and approving curriculum for the programs is not outlined anywhere in the agreement, although course content, academic requirements and instructor qualifications are subject to prior approval of CUNY.

Several weeks before the 2013 memorandum went into effect, the CUNY Board of Trustees approved, at an April 29 meeting, the establishment of the title "Professor of Military Science," which, according to the board minutes, "is a non-tenure track position which does not carry any compensation or employment status at CUNY." With the establishment of the title, the board minutes state, CUNY would be able to establish other SROTC programs at other campuses should they wish to do so.

DECADES-LONG ABSENCE

Ongoing protests of students and faculty members throughout the 1960s, '70s and '80s succeeded in pushing ROTC out of CUNY. Before the recent reintroduction of ROTC, the last campus to host an ROTC program was John Jay College of Criminal Justice, which closed the program in 1989 due to protests around the military's discriminatory LGBT policies.

The push to reinstate the officer training program at CUNY came on the heels of the publication of a report by the conservative Ameri-

can Enterprise Institute titled "Underserved: A Case Study of ROTC in New York City." The report singled out CUNY as fertile ground for the program, stating that the military was "missing out on a huge potential recruiting pool," and making note of the diversity of the student body, including the large number of African-American graduates and the city's fast-growing

Muslim-American community. "By recruiting at CUNY, the ROTC would be targeting a student body for which 'cultural competency' is part of daily life," stated the May 2011 report. In September 2012, the first ROTC classes at CUNY began at York College, and the CUNY ROTC Task Force held its first meeting that December.

Currently, there are only two ROTC programs at CUNY, one at City College and another at York College. A short-lived program at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn ended at the conclusion of the 2014 spring semester after faculty decisively voted against authorizing an ROTC program. Unlike City Col-

lege and York College, the faculty body at Medgar Evers (known as the College Council) never voted on whether to bring ROTC to the campus prior to the program's establishment. Instead, faculty organized a town hall debate, and on February 24, 2014, the College Council voted 30-21 against authorizing the program. Almost a month after the council vote, college president Rudy Crew said that the "vote is binding," and the program would close at the end of the semester (see April 2014 *Clarion*, "Medgar Evers College Council votes 'No' to ROTC").

FACULTY RESISTANCE

At the College of Staten Island, what seemed to be a done deal to bring SROTC to that campus was abandoned after faculty opposing the establishment of a program organized, and several department chairs refused to house the program.

"The program was never adopted by a department. It just mysteriously went away," said John Lawrence, professor of psychology at CSI, who found out at a general chairs meeting about plans to bring an ROTC program to his college. Lawrence recalls that he and other faculty, pressing administration on out-

lining the process for approving a program, received only vague responses. "We inferred from their actions that it had to be a program affiliated with a department, and the curriculum would have to be approved by the Faculty Senate," Lawrence told *Clarion* (see December 2013 *Clarion*, "CSI debates ROTC plans").

In setting up ROTC programs at CUNY campuses, the University appears not to have an official process in place, nor do the agreements between CUNY and the Army outline anything like a protocol involving standard means of governance. Instead, the process for establishing a program seems to rest ultimately with the Army, the chancellor's office and the president of the local college.

Three years in, the ROTC program has around 120 cadets from various colleges in the CUNY system. According to Raj, the Army has kicked in a little more than \$2.5 million in scholarships, as well as \$230,000 to sponsor CUNY athletic programs and \$70,000 for STEM-related conferences at various colleges. Raj hopes to see the program grow, he told *Clarion*, with at least 400 cadets enrolled in the next two years and opening programs at any campus that "shows the initiative."

Words of love, kin and revolution

Ava Chin, a Queens College alumna who currently teaches at the College of Staten Island, read her poem, "winter," at the PSC literary event, "CUNY Writers Against Austerity: A Reading in Defense of CUNY,"

which took place at The Great Hall of the Cooper Union on March 20. The event featured some 50 poets and writers who teach at CUNY. Here, *Clarion* presents an excerpt from Chin's poem.

winter

(excerpt)

By AVA CHIN

Associate Professor, English Department
College of Staten Island

On the picket line we circle
breath

we make track marks in the snow

And I learn more and more of
her language

and protest.

Booi Got is boycott

Gee Chi is support

My Chinese is a hot pot of
Marxist ideology

worker rhythms and rants

peppered with practicalities like,
"Where is the bathroom?"

Mistaking the intonation for
"Take this" for this "whiteness"
confusing "chicken" and "eat" for
"explanation."

Explanation.

You gave me more excuses than I
asked for so

I shut the door on explanations.



Ava Chin performs her poem "winter" at the March 20 union event "CUNY Writers Against Austerity," in The Great Hall of the Cooper Union.



15-MINUTE ACTIVIST

Stand in solidarity

For more than a month, 40,000 Verizon workers nationwide have been on strike in what is described as the largest labor action in recent years. The workers are protesting company efforts to close call centers, outsource jobs, reduce benefits and eliminate job security. Management has not addressed workers' concerns despite

record-breaking profits in recent years. PSC activists have been marching on Verizon picket lines with their union brothers and sisters from CWA and IBEW. Join a picket line near you, and if you haven't done so already, sign the petition "Stand With Striking Workers!" To add your name to fight for good jobs with fair pay, go to standuptoverizon.com.

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

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The resounding power of 'Yes!'

By **BARBARA BOWEN**
PSC President

Strike authorization sends clear message

Now that PSC members have voted "yes" – by a total of 92 percent – to authorize the Executive Council to call a strike if it should become necessary, the union has sent an unequivocal message to CUNY Chancellor James B. Milliken and to lawmakers in Albany that PSC members are determined to fight for what we need – and what our students need.

The union remains committed to achieving an acceptable contract through the negotiating process, but the membership has now authorized us to take action if there is no alternative.

Ninety-two percent of those who cast ballots voted "yes," and the number of ballots was well over 10,000, giving us an absolute majority of "yes" votes. That is a landmark result. It would be a powerful result in any context, but it is especially powerful for a union whose members have worked six years without a raise and who understand that a strike would come with financial and legal penalties.

BUILDING SUPPORT

The vote empowers the union leadership to demand a contract that addresses the austerity conditions in which we work and our students learn. No one wants a strike – but nor will we accept an unfair contract. CUNY management has one way to show that they mean what they say about respecting the faculty and staff: Put a decent economic offer on the table.

The union bargaining team will walk into our next negotiating session with the power of a 92-percent "yes" vote at our backs. Contract talks with CUNY are ongoing, and the union is doing its utmost to reach an acceptable agreement within the next few weeks.

The union leadership is also working with lawmakers in Albany to build on the support many have expressed for funding our contract. But responsibility for making a fair

financial offer rests with CUNY; management must do what it takes – in Albany and internally – to provide sufficient funds.

The New York State budget passed in Albany last month has been justly praised for lifting the minimum wage and introducing paid family leave. Both are gains for all New Yorkers – and both were strongly supported by the PSC.

QUICK ACTION NEEDED

But the budget left a major piece of the economic justice agenda unfinished. By failing to fund our contract it has endangered the university that serves exactly the people affected by a higher minimum wage. Albany must act quickly if it is to deliver on its promise of reducing economic inequality.

The value of our salaries has fallen as the cost of living in New

York City has soared – by 23 percent, according to The Economist.

Even before the current crisis, CUNY faculty salaries were thousands of dollars lower than those at comparable institutions, such as Rutgers or University of Connecticut. Now they are completely uncompetitive. One professor took a \$30,000 salary cut from her job as a high school teacher to come to CUNY after earning her Ph.D. And that was before she went six years without a raise.

CUNY's secret has always been that professors and other academic staff who could work anywhere choose to work at CUNY because we have a vision of a world in which college education is accessible to all, not restricted by race and class. Working at CUNY is a labor of love; we do it because there is nothing like teaching CU-

NY's brave, committed, resilient students.

After six years without a raise, however, the thread that holds many of us to CUNY is starting to snap. Salaries are so uncompetitive that academic departments are struggling to keep the professors they have or to fill open positions. You can read on pages 4-5 in this issue of Clarion how eight department chairs are experiencing the impact of CUNY's failure to provide reasonable salaries. I'm sure every one of us who works at CUNY has a version of the same story to tell. The lack of a contract has begun to hurt CUNY's core mission – teaching and learning.

FACULTY ON FOOD STAMPS

CUNY has been on a forced austerity diet for decades; it already balances its budget by relying on instructors who are paid by the course – at a fraction of the rate

of full-time professors – for more than half of its teaching. These faculty are hit hardest by the lack of a raise; some have been forced to rely on food stamps.

ENOUGH MONEY

There is enough money in this rich state to support high-quality public college education. The issue is policy, not resources. Albany's failure to fund our contract reflects a political decision not to invest in the students we teach. If Albany wants to take serious aim at inequality, it must allow us to do our jobs well and fund the contracts of CUNY employees.

CUNY has champions in Albany, and there are promising signs that a resolution will emerge. But lawmakers must act with urgency; the legislative session ends in June. What is needed now is the political imagination to value CUNY students – and the political will to support those who have the privilege of working with them.



PSC President Barbara Bowen at the American Arbitration Association on May 12, as AAA workers tallied strike authorization ballots.

Michel Friang