When the City Council passed a new municipal budget at the end of June, it voted to restore most of the funds that Mayor Bloomberg had sought to cut from City support for CUNY. But as Clarion went to press, the State budget was three months late and counting, with no clear solution in sight. Resistance to Gov. Paterson’s plan to “deregulate” public university tuition appeared to be holding firm – but the final result was still hard to predict.
City Council rejects most Bloomberg cuts

By PETER Hogness

Just before Clarion went to press, the City Council approved a budget for the 2010-2011 fiscal year that restored most of the funds in City support for CUNY that Mayor Bloomberg had sought to cut. Budget restorations by the City Council totaled $32.3 million.

“In such a difficult budget year, this is an achievement,” said PSC First Vice President Steve London. “And it’s thanks to everyone in the CUNY community who fought back against these budget reductions.”

The Council restored $21.4 million that Bloomberg sought to cut from community college operating aid, as well as $8.2 million in related member-item support. This puts City operating aid above the level in last year’s budget.

Bloomberg had also sought to completely eliminate a number of CUNY institutes and initiatives with separate funding streams, and here only some of the funds cut by the mayor were restored. For example, the mayor had cut all $9.5 million in funding for Vailone Scholarships, of which the Council restored $8.3 million. The Black Male Empowerment Initiative got 90% of its $2.5 million in funding restored, sustaining a net reduction of $250,000.

“The Puerto Rican Studies Institute and Dominican Studies Institute, saw reductions of $220,000 and $550,000 – or almost half their annual budgets. Also, the $300,000 cut to the Murphy Institute funds was not restored. At press time it was unclear whether some of those funding gaps would be met through other sources.”

“Overall, it’s clear that CUNY was prioritized by the council,” said London. “And our about-face had that kind of impact began with members deciding to participate in PSC borough political action committees, and making regular contributions to VOTE:COPE, which allowed us to be very active during last year’s city council elections. We helped elect many council members who understand what CUNY means to the life of this city, and this June we saw the difference that can make.”

$32.3 million in funds restored.

POLITICAL LITERACY COMES TO CITY HALL

A June 3 rally at City Hall Park successfully urged local lawmakers to restore funds cut from adult literacy programs.

unions & community groups say ‘Save Our City’

As City budget talks came down to the wire, the PSC joined with thousands of other municipal unions and community groups on June 16 in a protest against Mayor Bloomberg’s proposed budget cuts. Sponsored by the Municipal Labor Committee, it was a rally to “Save Our City.”

“I want to make sure that they don’t close the budget deficit on the backs of public workers,” said Nicole Hula, an assistant professor of sociology at Queens College. “I’m here as a public worker myself. Instead of deep budget cuts, she said, “we need to have that millionaires’ tax, we need to be talking about it.”

VITAL SERVICES

“It’s painful to me to think about what would happen to our students if there are major cuts at BMCC,” said Ingrid Hughes, an adjunct lecturer in English at BMCC and Baruch. “My students need so much support. Their classes are already too big. They’re struggling so hard, they’re up against so much, that even small cuts can make a big difference.”

The City Hall rally opposed cuts to public libraries, community health centers, hospitals, libraries, hospitals, senior centers and other vital City services. Layoffs of public workers would hurt NYC’s many communities, neighborhood activists said.

in my op-ed in the May Clarion, I noted that not in the aggregate, public sector workers are better compensated than private-sector workers. Prof. Jayaraman’s response in the same issue noted, rightly, that they make less when one compares jobs. But that is not the end of the story. At the high end of the labor market (economists, accountants and lawyers), government workers earn less than their private-sector counterparts, which drags down the numbers. At the low end of the labor market, for clerks and janitors, public sector work is a much better deal. Furthermore, more comparable work studies, like the one she cites, leave out teachers, cops, firefighters and corrections officers. And monopoly service providers’ unions have been among the most effective at increasing salaries and benefits. All things considered, then, the public-private gap is real. And Jayaraman’s solution of raising taxes on the rich – gratifying as it might be – to shelter the public sector from the economic storm is unrealistic and misses the point. Given recent spending increases and the proportion of New York State and City taxes the wealthy already pay, raising sufficient revenue would require raising middle class taxes. Such a move would only fuel the backlash about which I warned.

THE LONG HAUL

The next day, it was announced that the MTA would continue to provide student MetroCards with its $27,000 annual price, but no news came on whether the government will continue to pay for the MetroCards they need to get to school. “That’s an upside-down world! We’re bailing out billionaire bankers, and we’re making kids pay to go to school! What happened to us, what happened to this society?”

Samuelson asked. “I’m here to say that the public sector workforce needs to join together, dig our heels in, stand side-to-side and fight to defend our livelihoods. If we stand together we’re going to prevail.”

PROMOTIONS IN THE HEO LINES

CUNY’s HEOs are like the water over the earth: people working in the Higher Education Officer series are everywhere in CUNY.

During the listening campaign we held last year at Brooklyn College, HEOS expressed major concern over the lack of a transparent promotion process. In place of clear promotional steps, the current reclassification process is a mystery to most staff and to their supervisors. Professional staff work long and hard hours completing all sorts of complex assignments, too often without recognition or remuneration.

Managers and supervisors complain that there is no real mechanism to promote a good person.

Providing a clear promotional process within the HEO series is a key issue for contract negotiations. Some have suggested that HEOS create a portfolio, analogous to the one that faculty use, for the purpose of promotions. Whatever the steps, the time has come for CUNY to treat HEOS as the professionals that we are.

When is a salary ‘too much’?

In my op-ed in the May Clarion, I noted that in the aggregate, public sector workers are better compensated than private-sector workers. Prof. Jayaraman’s response in the same issue noted, rightly, that they make less when one compares jobs. But that is not the end of the story. At the high end of the labor market (economists, accountants and lawyers), government workers earn less than their private-sector counterparts, which drags down the numbers. At the low end of the labor market, for clerks and janitors, public sector work is a much better deal. Furthermore, more comparable work studies, like the one she cites, leave out teachers, cops, firefighters and corrections officers. And monopoly service providers’ unions have been among the most effective at increasing salaries and benefits. All things considered, then, the public-private gap is real. And Jayaraman’s solution of raising taxes on the rich – gratifying as it might be – to shelter the public sector from the economic storm is unrealistic and misses the point. Given recent spending increases and the proportion of New York State and City taxes the wealthy already pay, raising sufficient revenue would require raising middle class taxes. Such a move would only fuel the backlash about which I warned.

Daniel DiSalvo

CDNY

Saru Jayaraman (Brooklyn College) responds: Prof. DiSalvo is concerned that public-sector workers “at the low end of the labor market” are “living on $27,000 a year” and that this is “as low as $16,000 a year less than those at private institutions.” Yet when Prof. DiSalvo wrote his original op-ed for the Daily News, he did not tell his 600,000 readers that public university wages are too low.

There are more important reasons why CUNY salaries should be increased – for example, search committees often lose their top choices to other institutions where pay is better. But if one is going to take the private-sector labor market as the measure of all things, one should at least be consistent. It seems perverse to apply this rule mainly to public employees who earn the least.

The solution to New York’s budget problems does not lie in scapegoating public workers. The real solution is in the progressive tax reform measures backed by the PSC, (see p.3), which would close the State’s $9 billion deficit without raising taxes on the middle class.

Unions & community groups say ‘Save Our City’
Late State budget endgame

By Peter Hoggness

As Clarion went to press at the beginning of July, the New York State budget, now more than three months overdue, was still unresolved – and public higher education was at the center of the conflict.

The Governor’s Executive budget contained very controversial proposals for public higher education. It cut CUNY senior colleges by $84.4 million and the community colleges by $21 million. Cuts to TAP totaled $49 million. The Governor also proposed privatizing much of CUNY and SUNY by withdrawing state support and letting public higher education fend for itself.

By June, the governor’s insistence on his higher education proposals and other privatizing initiatives, and tax property tax caps had brought budget negotiations between the governor and the state legislature to a standstill. Without a budget in place, the money New York State needs to function was being provided by short-term emergency spending bills. Such “extender” bills must be drafted by the governor and voted up or down without amendment – and Paterson was aggressively using this provision in his power struggle with the Legislature.

In each emergency bill, Paterson included pieces of his overall proposal. Since voting “no” would mean shutting down State government, legislators reluctantly approved each one of these bills, and then ended up enacting a majority of Paterson’s FY 2011 budget plan in bills and pieces.

Furlough

Paterson used the same approach to pressure the Legislature into approving his furlough plan. A lawsuit by the PSC and other public-sector unions blocked implementation of the furlough measure.

One of Paterson’s major goals has been to enact his Public Higher Education Empowerment & Investment Act, or PHEEIA, which would drastically restructure the financing of CUNY and SUNY. The governor declared that June 28 was his deadline for passage of a budget – and that PHEEIA must be part of it. If no budget had been approved by that date, Paterson said, he would put all his remaining budget measures, plus PHEEIA, into an emergency extender.

The PSC, UUP and NYSUT all oppose PHEEIA as a path to the privatization of public higher education. If passed, it would allow the CUNY and SUNY Trustees to raise tuition annually without legislative oversight, at their own discretion. It would also permit different tuition rates for different colleges and even for different majors.

“The Empowerment Act would be a disaster for CUNY. It is essentially a proposal to reduce public funding and replace it with private funding, in the form of higher tuition,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “This year’s State budget is a case in point: the governor’s proposal includes both the Empowerment Act and severe cuts to CUNY and SUNY.”

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Higher ed issues at center of the fight

At the start of July, Senate and Assembly leaders had prepared a revenue resolution that did not contain PHEEIA language, but last-minute maneuvering by pro-PHEEIA Senate Democrats kept it from coming to a vote. July 19 was reported as a possible date for attempts to override Paterson’s veto.

As this battle unfolded in Albany, PSC members gave a big response to a PSC strategy to voice their opposition to PHEEIA. By July union members had sent 5,000 messages to their representatives opposing PHEEIA at the ballot box.

At the end of July, the final outcome was still unknown. PHEEIA proponents had rejected mediation, but opposition also remained strong.

PSC blocks Paterson furlough plan

By Peter Hoggness

In May the PSC and other public-employee unions blocked Gov. David Paterson’s attempt to furlough State workers, including CUNY faculty and staff, for one day per week. In a May 26 ruling, US District Judge Lawrence Kahn agreed with the PSC’s lawsuit on every point and halted the furlough scheme, which would have cut employees’ pay by $6 an hour.

“The PSC won a victory for CUNY faculty and staff and also for CUNY students,” said PSC President Barbara Bowen. “It was the PSC’s law suit. It meant that the thousands of students who attend CUNY in the summer did not face the prospect of classes cancelled, credits denied, dreams put on hold. Judge Kahn’s ruling against the illegal scheme for mandatory pay cuts was also a victory for all public workers.”

Political Ploy

The union noted that Paterson’s furlough plan would only have produced about $240 million, while the State deficit stood at $89 billion. “The furlough scheme had nothing to do with closing the budget deficit,” said Bowen. “It was a political ploy, an attempt to scapegoat public workers for an economic crisis that we did not create.” The only real way to deal with the deficit, she emphasized, is through progressive tax reform.

The PSC and other unions argued in court that the furlough plan was a violation of their collective bargaining agreements that was both illegal and unconstitutional. The judge agreed that the governor had not shown why such a move was either reasonable or necessary. “In its submissions to the Court,” Judge Kahn wrote, “the State artificially limits the scope of its alternatives for addressing the fiscal crisis to retrieving a certain amount of savings from unionized State employees.” But as a matter of both law and logic, the judge continued, “the desired savings need not come from State personnel.”

In his comments to the press, Gov. Paterson insisted that furloughing public employees was necessary “because their union leadership has rejected all other reasonable attempts at compromise.”

Paterson countered by using his veto power to reject the spending items the Legislature had approved, item by item.

The Legislature still had to pass revenue bills to fund its spending plan. As Clarion went to press, its two houses wrestled over how to close the budget gap without new taxes and, if PHEEIA was at the center of the dispute. While the Assembly has some general preferences, Senate Democrats are strong supporters of PHEEIA, believing it will help economic development in their region. Since neither chamber has only a two-seat majority, they must be united to pass budget bills.

In addition to the lawsuit, the PSC and other unions launched a protest against the furlough plan. On May 10 a PSC protest outside Paterson’s office in midtown Manhattan drew nearly 150 people on less than 24 hours notice. Protesters were angered at the unfairness of the plan, in particular that “I don’t want my livelihood or my students’ education used as political bargaining tools,” said Leila Walkington, who teaches at Lehman College.

PSC and DC 37 members protesting outside Gov. Paterson’s Manhattan office.

Students

Yina Chun, a senior at Hunter College, agreed. “As students in the wealthiest city in a wealthy country, for our future to be immersed in political games is not fair,” she said. “It’s an outrage that the teaching staff has to deal with this legislation.”

Media coverage of the PSC’s actions included an interview with Barbara Bowen on Channel 13, and a trip by Paterson’s administra tion made no public statement against the furlough plan.

“We were successful because we used our voice,” said PSC Treasurer Mike Fabricant. “Individually, we would have been relatively powerless against the governor’s line-item veto power, but collectively, we had a shot at being successful.”
RF workers take it to the top

Contract campaign continues

The students vowed to approve a follow-up strike for January if there is another attempt to increase tuition.

Arizona feels the heat

Academia has begun to shun Arizona since the state’s passage of SB 1070, a controversial new law that requires police to question anyone they suspect may be an undocumented immigrant. The National Autonomous University of Mexico and the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí (Mexico) have suspended student exchange programs with the University of Arizona due to concerns about students being harassed. SACNAS, a national society of scientists, will not consider Arizona as a site for its 2012 national conference, according to University Business magazine, while the American Educational Research Association Board of directors voted to no longer meet in Arizona unless the law is repealed.

By JOHN TARLETON

Puerto Rico students beat back budget cuts

Students at the University of Puerto Rico agreed to end a 60-day strike on June 21 after the island’s government agreed to almost all their demands. Opposition to Gov. Luis Fortuno’s proposed plan to increase tuition while reducing student aid had fueled the protest movement. The first campus shutdown took place on April 21 at the main Rio Piedras campus in San Juan, which quickly led to takeovers at all 11 of the university’s campuses. The strikers received broad public support as well as backing from an overwhelming majority of faculty and staff, who honored the students’ picket lines. The students vowed to approve a follow-up strike for January if there is another attempt to increase tuition.

DOJ, John Jay settle lawsuit

Immigrant discrimination case

The settlement provides for the DOJ’s Office of Special Counsel and to report to the Department of Justice accused John Jay of violating the rights of at least 153 individuals since 2007 by treating citizens and non-citizens differently and requiring non-citizens to supply more work eligibility documentation than those required by law.

Training

Under the agreement, John Jay will provide training to all employees who are involved in employment eligibility verification, including managers and all employees who have any role in completing the I-9 employment form or instructing others how to do so. Trainees will be required to watch a videotape provided by the Office of the Special Counsel and participate in at least three hours of employment eligibility verification training. Under federal regulations, the types of forms that prospective employees can use to demonstrate that they are legally authorized to work are divided into three lists: A, B and C. The documents on List A establish both identity and legal authorization to work (for example, a Permanent Resident Card aka “green card”) or a US passport. List B establishes identity only (e.g., a driver’s license), while List C only establishes authorization to work (such as a Social Security card, if it has no printed restrictions on its use for employment authorization). Prospective employees can choose to submit either a single document from List A (establishing both identity and work authorization) or one document from List B (to establish identity) and one from List C (to establish work authorization). The rules must be applied consistently to all, regardless of citizenship status.

The complainant, a part-time computer lab assistant, was fired by John Jay College after she did not provide a green card. But she had already provided her driver’s license (from List B) together with her Social Security card, which was unrestricted (from List C) which is all the law requires. Demanding that she produce further documentation was illegal under the 1996 Immigration and Nationality Act.

“Employers should understand that it’s the worker’s choice which documents to provide,” said Rebecca Smith, coordinator of justice for immigrants at the National Employment Law Project. Smith added that the provision is “pretty common,” and other immigration lawyers told Clarion that to some extent it is fostered by an asymmetry in the law: the penalties for hiring undocumented workers are stiffer than the penalties for discrimination.

WORKER’S CHOICE

Carl Williams, chair of the PSC chapter at John Jay, expressed support for the planned training sessions. “We need to properly train all our employees so they can carry out their jobs under the law,” he said. Williams suggested that budget cuts at the college may lead to reduced training for human resources personnel and that a recent increase in retirements has added to the college’s administrative challenges.

“When you take on that amount of new employees, you need to focus on training,” Williams said. “You can’t assume the people coming in know everything.”
For the past six years, the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions—formerly incarcerated people pursuing a college degree. It helps them navigate the financial aid system, provides counseling services and assists them with completing remedial coursework. Staffed by former offenders who have used higher education to transform their own lives, NuLeadership also engages in a range of research and public policy work.

“Helping people who have chosen to turn their lives around and come to Medgar,” said NuLeadership co-founder Eddie Ellis. “That could soon change.

When NuLeadership moved from its original home in Harlem to the Medgar Evers campus in 2004, it operated as a program of the college’s Center for Law and Social Justice. By the spring of 2009 its work had grown, and the Medgar Evers College Council approved NuLeadership’s request to operate as a separate entity.

But in May 2010, Ellis and NuLeadership Executive Director Divine Pryor learned to their detriment that the Medgar Evers administration did not recognize their organization’s legal status at the college, though they had been operating since August 2009 with the understanding that they were one of the college’s academic centers. The Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions is listed as such on the Medgar Evers College website, on its own page and on more than a dozen others.

COURT TO COLLEGE

After a couple of unsuccessful attempts to meet with MEC’s new president, William Pollard, Ellis and Pryor met on June 4 with Provost Howard Ellis, MEC’s Operating Officer Lloyd Blanchard to clarify what they thought was a misunderstanding. According to Ellis, Johnson told him that the previous provost had never forwarded the College Council’s action to CUNY central administration for final approval by the Board of Trustees, nor did Johnson plan to do so. The college also refused to release already approved funding for NuLeadership’s work, Ellis said, and declined to support NuLeadership’s grant applications for future funding.

One project they discussed was a three-year, $2.4 million grant proposal for the Center for Criminal and Social Justice (C2C) initiative to the State Division of Criminal Justice Services, through which first-time nonviolent drug offenders would attend college or other educational programs before or after supervision, instead of being sent to prison. Ellis said that over the past year NuLeadership and C2C had arranged for a small number of people to be given this option by the Brooklyn Treatment Court, with the concurrence of the Kings County District Attorney’s Office, and the proposed Court to College (C2C) program would expand this work.

According to Ellis, Blanchard described the students who would be served by the C2C initiative as a “criminal element” whose presence on campus would be a “threat to the security of the college and an insurance liability.” Johnson affirmed Blanchard’s comments, Ellis told Clarion, and expressed concern that students in the C2C program would also represent a danger to a nearby high school and day-care center.

“We were shocked,” said Ellis, who earned a BA in business administration and a master’s degree in theology while serving 25 years in New York State prison. The Center for NuLeadership went public with the dispute in a written statement on June 14.

In its own press release on June 22, the MEC administration portrayed the issue as one of organizational and fiscal accountability. It said that the C2C grant proposal had “serious deficiencies” — for example, that it did not have a principal investigator who is a CUNY employee — and objected to the fact that neither Ellis nor Pryor (whose salaries are paid by grants) is an employee of CUNY or the college.

The administration’s press release did not dispute the accuracy of the comments attributed to Blanchard and Johnson by NuLeadership. In response to subsequent questions from Clarion, the MEC administration asserted that NuLeadership’s press release had “misrepresented statements made in the June 4 meeting.” It added, however, that “certainly the administration is concerned with the security of its students, faculty and staff and whatever fiscal or legal liability may befall the college.”

The confrontation at MEC sparked an outpouring of support for the Center for NuLeadership from advocates for criminal justice reform.

NuLeadership has “a stellar reputation,” said Vivian Nixon, executive director of the College and Community Fellowship, which serves formerly incarcerated women and community-based college, such as Medgar Evers College.

On June 19, a delegation of Central Brooklyn elected officials led by Congresswoman Yvette Clarke met with President Pollard to air their concerns. “There is not a lot of support for a program like that because the administration is concerned with the background of project staff or former convicts who would be served,” she said. “If we were serious about reforming the system, we wouldn’t be looking for some arcane rule or regulation to prevent us from doing it.”

MEC blocks ex-prisoner project

By JOHN TARLETON

Like many others, Nixon strongly objected to the idea that a program like C2C would prove a liability. “There has been absolutely no research, no data that proves that a person who has a criminal record...” For example, “to go to college post-conviction is any more dangerous to society than any other person who is going to college,” she told Clarion.

“There’s no scholarly argument for this,” Glenn Martin, vice president for public policy at the Fortune Society, a New York City-based non-profit that helps formerly incarcerated people develop the skills and the education they need in order to be effective.

“In the ‘pipeline’ to be blocked,” Ellis said. “Ellis said the college had not disbursed funds from a pair of past member-item grants from State legislators: one for $10,000 for career counseling and another for $25,000 from State Senator Velmanette Montgomery. “It’s very urgent,” Ellis said. “We’re running out of money for the copying paper and toner.”

MEC administration says that the C2C grant application did not include sufficient information on the background of project staff or enough details on how funds would be used, including the organization’s legal status. In addition, the administration added, “CUNY policy requires the principal investigator’s “personnel and fiscal accountability.” The administration is concerned about “potential violations of CUNY policy, which prohibit[s] centers from duplicating the academic efforts of the college,” a spokesperson told Clarion. Since NuLeadership’s proposal says its goal is to produce “scholars and scholarship,” he said, this would “run afoul of CUNY policy,” because that is a conflict of interest.

“It sounds like these guys are grasping for straws,” responded Ellis. “If they were serious about reforming the system, they wouldn’t have to look at such arcane rules or regulations to prevent us from doing it.”

COST-EFFECTIVE

Ironically, the debate over NuLeadership’s role at Medgar Evers is taking place at a time when budget-conscious federal and State policymakers are looking for innovative ways to keep former offenders from returning to prison.

As Michelle Fine, distinguished professor of psychology at the Graduate Center told Clarion, “A college education is probably the most cost-effective, multi-level improvement we could be considering, instead of incarcerating the lives of people who have been incarcerated or arrested.”

“From my own experience. Describing himself as a “perpetual optimist,” he said he was confident about NuLeadership’s proposal to develop a program like C2C: “It makes sense for Medgar to go right when everybody else is going left. Ultimately, this will get resolved and we will be able to continue going in the direction we are going.”
Members increased their support for New Caucus (NC) candidates in the PSC’s Spring 2010 chapter elections. The chapter at Medgar Evers College saw a political change of the guard, with NC candidates winning for the first time in the chapter’s history. A New Caucus slate was again elected to lead the Higher Education Officers Chapter, and again defeated at Kingsborough Community College, but in both cases NC candidates significantly increased their share of the vote.

Clifton Crawford, a professor of mass communication, won 50% of 138 votes in his race for the DA at Medgar Evers College, defeating long-time chapter chair Ed Catapano’s re-election bid.

“The real breakthrough,” said Crawford. “People rallied around a relatively new group of candidates because they felt it was time for a change. They showed confidence in the slate we put forward.”

OFFICE SPACE

One key issue facing the chapter, said Crawford, is the college’s physical plant. “For example, in the School of Liberal Arts and Education we have more than a hundred adjuncts—and only one small room, about 5% of 1.4% for our space.”

Other issues, he added, include fairness in faculty pay and equitable treatment of faculty members who had spoken critically of college administration.

“We have a mandate given to us, and we will work to represent all of the faculty,” Crawford told Clarion.

At Kingsborough, incumbent chapter chair Rina Yarmish won re-election by a margin of 50% to 45% for NC challenger Susan Farrell, out of a total of 412 votes. The result represented a drop in support for Yarmish, who had received 72% of 341 votes in KCC’s last election for chapter chair in 2007. A major increase in turnout heavily favored the NC slate, and Yarmish’s absolute number of votes fell from 244 in 2007 to 228 this year. But the NC candidates still came up short, leaving Yarmish’s Faculty First slate with a solid win.

In response to a request for comments on the election and key issues facing the chapter, Yarmish provided the following statement. “As president of the Demographics slate, I am getting the membership more involved in addressing these problems,” DeLatro said. “So I am particularly interested in interventions that will attract young, and wondering if the chapter leadership is a good sign.” She also paid tribute to Jean Weisman, who served as HEO chapter chair for the past nine years. “We are very grateful for Jean’s leadership,” DeLatro said. “She has been very instrumental in raising awareness about HEO issues, in CUNY and in the PSC.”

The rest of this year’s chapter elections were uncontested. Among the larger chapters, New Caucus slates were elected unopposed at College of Staten Island, BMCC, City Tech and Lehman College Community College. The new chair of the Retirees Chapter, Jim Perlestein, was elected on a slate from the Retiree Caucus. At Lehman, longtime chapter chair Helene Silverman was re-elected on the Fusion Caucus slate.

In the Manhattan EOC and Hunter Campus Schools Chapters, local candidates were elected without opposition. Uncontested votes in the Bronx EOC, Research Foundation and Registrars Chapters went to candidates who ran without a slate.

Chapter elections show New Caucus gains

Three local races contested

PSC elections are staggered on a three-year cycle. Approximately half the chapters hold elections one year, the other half votes the year after, and union-wide elections are held the year after that.

In the list below, those new to their position are listed in italics.

Bronx Educational Opportunity Center: Chairperson, Francisco Muñoz; Vice Chairperson, David Smith

College of Staten Island: Chairperson, Vasileios Petrakas; Vice Chairperson, Roslyn Bologh; Secretary, Gloria Gianousis; Officers at Large, Emili Ché, Salyaprapa Das, Stephen Stearns, Howard Weiner; Delegates to the DA, Jessica Burke, Richard Flanagan, David Kitt, Sonia Rager; Alternates to the DA, Myra Hauben, Irwing Robbins, Susan Rocco, William Smith, Welfare Fund Council, Gloria M. Cortopas-asi, Cheryl W

Kingsborough Community College: Chairperson, Rina Yarmish, Vice Chairperson, Michael Sokolow; Secretary, Stephen Majewicz; Officers at Large, Donald Hume, Denis Nivack, Silvea Thomas, William Winter; Delegates to the DA, Michael Barnhart, Gordon Bassen, Ronald Forman, Cliff Hesse, Theodore Marcus, William Roomey; Alternates to the DA, John Acosta, Susan Aranoff, Donald Donin, Alfonso Garcia-Usana, Florence Schneider; Welfare Fund Council, Gregory Arizin, Richard Baum

Lehman College: Chairperson, Helene Silverman; Vice Chairperson, Rosalind Carey; Secretary, Duane Tananhub; Officers at Large, Norma Auerbach, Amoud Choudary, Joseph Rachlin, Kevin Sailor; Delegates to the DA, Jonathan Hulah, Wayne Halliday, John Minelka, Manfred Philipp; Alternates to the DA, Arto Artimian, Mary Carroll; Welfare Fund Council, Dana Penston, Christie Folsom

Borough of Manhattan Community College: Chairperson, Rebecca Hill [now at another university; Joyce Moorman is acting chair]; Vice Chairperson, Joyce Moorman; Secretary, Geoffrey Kurtz; Officers at Large, Rafael Corbalan, Gail Manmouri, Margo Nash, Linda Wadas; Delegates to the DA, Francesco Croco, Kathleen Saseck Ford, Anthony Gronowicz, Geoffrey Kurtz, Howard Melzer, Joyce Moorman, Kathleen Offenholley, Charles Pias; Alternates to the DA, Carol Bilysky-Bieniek, Will Hutchison, Hycapit Martin, Yolanda Medina, Shirley Reausher; Welfare Fund Council, Kenneth Levinson, Marci Newfield

Manhattan Educational Opportunity: Chairperson, Karen Berry; Vice Chairperson, Samuel Paul; Secretary, Gwenn Kearsie; Officers at Large, Ma- rel Marlhamarack, Carolyn Watford, Lawrence Williams; Alternates to the DA, Michael Hatchette

Medgar Evers College: Chairperson, Clinton Crawford; Vice Chairperson, Jean Gumbs; Secretary, Iro Baker; Officers at Large, Verna Green, David Hatchett, Jo Ann Joyner, Anthony Udofialimogne; Alternates to the DA, Gloucester Aubalbi, William Daly; Alternates to the DA, David Hatchett, Jo Ann Joyner, Anthony Udofialimogne; Welfare Fund Council, Darius Movasseghi, Earlean Smiley

NYC College of Technology: Chairperson, Robert Ceramic; Vice Chairperson, Stephen James; Secretary, Teso Tobin; Officers at Large, Mary Browne, Kyle Cuadrilone, JoAnn Marciano, Sharon Swackter; Delegates to the DA, Kyle Cuadrilone, Paul Andre, Marcie Moore, Robert Nelson, Peter Sokolow, Joseph Rachlin, Dean Spence, Joan Mason, Patricia Rudder, Benjamin Shepard; Alternates to the DA, Malcolm Ethkans, Carole Harris, Konstantin Panayotakis, Abubakar Tidal Jr., Gerald

Van Loon; Welfare Fund Council, Jackie Elliot, Helen Frank

Queensborough Community College: Chairperson, Judith Barbanel; Vice Chairperson, Paula Berger; Secretary, Michael Cesarano; Officers at Large, Wilma Fletcher-Anthony, Anthony Kolios, Alexandra Tarasuko, Annatzu Rass, Lamont Cob, Gene Wolk; Alternates to the DA, Manette Berlinger, Aranzazu Borracho, Michael Cesarano, Joel Kuster, and Steven Sinclair; Alternates to the DA, Wilma Fletcher-Anthony, Elaine Klaw, Andrew Lee, Sharon Reeves, Roland Scal; Welfare Fund Council, Roland Scal, Lazo Nangi

Registrar: Chairperson, Jayne Zweig

Research Foundation Central Office: Chairperson, Anthony Dixon; Vice Chairperson, Dawn Siemens; Alternates to the DA, Victor Caceres

Retirees: Chairperson, Judith Perlestein; Vice Chairperson, Joel Berger; Secretary, Mary Bryce; Alternate to the DA, Paula Atwood, Stephen Leber- ton, Cecilia McCann, Ezra Seltzer; Alternates to the DA, Miriam Balmuth, Joel Berger, Peter Jonas, Robert Wartman, Welfare Fund Council, Irwin Yellowitz
Concerns on workload, salary

For example, both full-time and adjunct faculty who work at community colleges consistently expressed less satisfaction than senior college faculty with their authority to make decisions regarding course content, methods, standards and grading policies. Full-time faculty percentage of faculty who disagreed with this statement was different for different racial groups. For example, more than one-third of black full-time faculty in the survey disagreed with this statement, about three times the figure for senior college faculty. The results on this question varied widely by campus. At Medgar Evers College, 64% mildly to strongly agreed, as did 62% at Hostos. At City College the figure was 39%, and it was 40% at the Graduate Center. As with the 2005 Faculty Experience Survey, certain campuses consistently ranked high in the campus-by-campus tables, and others consistently low. Campus rankings frequently in the top five include the Graduate Center (frequently #1), Queens, Hostos, Kingsborough and Baruch. Those often in the bottom five included Medgar Evers College, BMCC, Bronx Community College and City College (frequently last).

CAMPUS GAPS

Items that attracted a greater than 50% spread between the highest and lowest rankings were the categories of office space, labs and research equipment, health and safety, and facility maintenance. Faculty or faculty of color – but the figure was 39%, and it was 40% at the Graduate Center. As with the 2005 Faculty Experience Survey, certain campuses consistently ranked high in the campus-by-campus tables, and others consistently low. Campus rankings frequently in the top five include the Graduate Center (frequently #1), Queens, Hostos, Kingsborough and Baruch. Those often in the bottom five included Medgar Evers College, BMCC, Bronx Community College and City College (frequently last).

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A teaching life

ESL expert taught it with love

By JOHN TARLETON

When Sylvia González first met Linda Kunz in 1976, she was a freshman at Hunter College and Kunz was a teacher in a developmental English class. “I remember very vividly the feedback she gave me,” González said of journal entries Kunz encouraged her to write about the beauty of her native Ecuador. A decade and a half later, González and Kunz met again—as fellow faculty members at The English Language Center (TELC) at LaGuardia Community College, the largest ESL program in the metro area. “I couldn’t believe after 17 years I would be with her again,” González recalled. “As colleagues and co-teachers, we were always communicating, collaborating and talking about our students’ needs.”

MASTER TEACHER

Kunz, who died suddenly at age 69, was remembered at a May 8 memorial as a tireless classroom teacher and a gifted pedagogue. Friends and colleagues spoke of her profound influence on ESL education, in both theory and practice. The event drew teachers from many CUNY colleges, from NYU and other institutions, and former students from as far away as China. The New York Times posthumously honored Kunz at its ESOL teaching awards ceremony in March, “for her extraordinary contributions to ESL education, in both theory and practice.”

“From the first time I saw Linda teach in 1969 to the last time in 2006 when we taught a graduate course together for ESL teachers at Lehman,” York College Chair Chair Janice Clinit told Clarion, “I always knew I was in the presence of a master teacher. That is why she became my mentor—and eventually, my best friend. Her students learned what she taught because she taught it with love, with imagination, with humor and joy.”

Kunz moved to LaGuardia in 1981, where she taught at TELC, which serves about 7,000 students a year, until her death last December. She also taught ESL at York, led ESL classes at John Jay for teachers from abroad, and taught graduate-level courses at Lehman and at NYU’s Steinhardt School of Education. While working as an adjunct at each of these institutions, Kunz left her mark on the pedagogy of ESL.

Kunz is known for her books, articles and workshops on X-Word Grammar, a method based on the Sector Analysis approach to teaching English that Kunz learned from her mentor, professor Robert Allen of Teachers College at Columbia University, where Kunz earned a doctorate in applied linguistics. X-Word Grammar emphasizes the word order of English and the regularity of its syntax; its name is derived from the auxiliary verbs that use in relatively simple and consistent ways.

Kunz mentored many ESL teachers in the CUNY system. “I wanted to find out more of what she knew,” recalled Laurie Gluck, a full-time faculty member at LaGuardia who switched from using traditional ESL textbooks to X-Word Grammar after meeting Kunz at TELC in 1985. “Sentence grammar is actually a much more concrete organizing principle for students to grasp onto. It absolutely changed the way I teach forever.”

“Linda had an original way of listening to students and adapting her way to their learning styles,” John Jay professor of English Elfie Cochran told Clarion. “In other words, she ‘subordinated teaching to learning.’” Kunz was also known for welcoming struggling students into her home for personal tutorials on her days off. A woman of wide and varied interests, Kunz was an active member of both the PSC at CUNY and UAW Local 2110 at NYU. She was active in the successful fight to preserve health care coverage for adjunct faculty at TELC after administrative changes at LaGuardia put it in danger.

MENTOR AND FRIEND

Four years ago Kunz began receiving dialysis treatment. Still, she plunged ahead with her work, rewriting two of her books in the summer of 2009 and conducting workshops on X-Word Grammar throughout the city. She was looking forward to conducting a X-Word seminar with several colleagues at her Upper West Side apartment on December 21, but passed away at home earlier that day.

“Up to the minute she left us, she was doing what she wanted to be doing,” said González.

CUNY approves early retirement incentive

On June 28, just before Clarion went to press, the CUNY Board of Trustees voted to approve CUNY’s participation in the 2010 early retirement incentive announced by New York State.

Details will be posted on the PSC website (www.psc-cuny.org) as they become available. For further information, contact your campus Human Resources office, or if you need additional help, call Clarissa Gilbert Weiss at the PSC office, (212) 242-3518.

Get Welfare Fund news via e-mail

The Welfare Fund is inviting members to join an e-mail notification list to receive word anytime significant changes are made to WF benefit programs. You can sign up for the notification list on the home page at pscunywf.org.

As new health care regulations affecting Welfare Fund benefits are implemented, e-mail announcements will allow the Fund to inform members on a more timely basis. All e-mail addresses will remain confidential. To sign up, key information will be sent by postal mail—such as your name, address, e-mail address and the benefit programs to which you are entitled. This information must be on file with the Welfare Fund before you can receive e-mail notifications.

Welfare Fund survey on benefits

In a survey released this Spring, 86% of CUNY Welfare Fund (WF) participants were asked about their knowledge of WF benefits, how much they understand them and their level of satisfaction. The survey was sponsored by the WF Advisory Council. A randomly selected sample of 1,750 retirees and 3,475 full-timers were invited to participate; 31% of retirees and 18% of full-timers responded. All 1,300 adjuncts with health insurance through the Welfare Fund were also invited to participate, and 6% did so.

STAY INFORMED

Overall, only 34% of respondents say their understanding of WF programs is high, while 42% rate their knowledge as fair, and 24% admit their understanding is limited or poor. Forty-one percent of retirees consider their benefits knowledge good or very good, compared with just 27% of full-timers and a mere 21% of adjuncts.

Even those who consider themselves informed need to be sure they stay current, said Thomas Gerson, a QCC retiree on the committee that designed the survey. He noted that a quarter of retiree respondents and the Extended Medical Benefit as valuable or most valuable, even though retirees over 65 are not eligible for this coverage. Gerson suggested that all WF members, whether active or retired, sign up for the new WF e-mail list to help stay well-informed (see sidebar).

Two-thirds of full-timers and retirees felt that prescription drugs were their first or second most valuable benefit, while 54% consider the dental benefit the first or second most valuable.

On which benefits should be targeted for improvement, two-thirds (67%) of the full-timers and retirees felt that improving dental benefits should be priority number one or two. About half (46%) chose prescription drugs as the first or second priority, followed by just over one-third (38%) who felt that improving optical benefits was the first or second priority.

Of full-timers respondents, 62% said their dentist is a plan participant, and 68% said the dental care they received was good or very good. Delta Dental was the choice of 15% while the rest opted to remain covered by Guardian. On the available choice of dentists who are plan participants, 22% of respondents were positive, 27% were neutral and 41% were critical.

The optical benefits are used frequently or very frequently by just 33% of full-time respondents and their family members. Satisfaction with the optical benefit was evenly distributed among those who rated it from very good to poor.

Adjuncts receive basic health insurance, prescription drug coverage and minimal optical coverage through the Welfare Fund. Because adjunct WF benefits are substantially different from the benefits for full-timers and retirees, adjunct survey responses were dealt with separately. (A small number of continuing education teachers receive the same WF benefits as full-timers, and were therefore included in the full-timer sample.)

The lower response rate among adjuncts may have been due to fewer adjuncts using campus e-mail, which is how those on the active payroll were contacted about the survey.

An overwhelming majority (85%) of adjunct respondents said they used their health plan three times or more. Most (84%) have chosen Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Only 16% have HIP. Slightly under half (42%) rate their satisfaction with their health plans and coverage as good or very good. Just over half (53%) of adjuncts surveyed considered their understanding of their benefits to be fair. One-fifth (21%) say their knowledge is high. Only one-third (32%) were aware that they could opt for participation in the WF’s voluntary catastrophic or long-term care plans.

COMMENTS

In the survey’s comment section, some adjunct respondents asked for better optical coverage; others mentioned the need for broader adjunct dental coverage. (Adjuncts in Blue Cross currently have no dental coverage, while those in HIP have oral exam and cleaning but no co-pay with dental care on a reduced fee schedule.) Eligible adjuncts currently receive basic health insurance without the co-pay for individuals covered through the Welfare Fund, but must pay between $2,400 and $3,900 per quarter for family coverage, several called for family coverage to be offered without additional charge.

NEWS & BENEFITS

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At this summer’s American Federation of Teachers’ convention, July 8 to 11 in Seattle, the PSC is working to influence the AFT’s agenda on professional and political issues for both educators and the labor movement. PSC-sponsored resolutions address higher education issues, government austerity, labor solidarity and labor’s stance toward US foreign policy.

Decisions made at AFT conventions shape policy for the 1.4 million-member union for the next two years. In the past, PSC delegates have had an important role in addressing the war in Iraq to academic staffing in higher education.

PUBLIC WORKERS

A proposed resolution on the economic crisis and public workers notes that the past two years have seen “a sharp increase in attempts to privatize the public sphere and impose fiscal austerity on public employees.” The collapse of financial markets has led to government budget deficits – but even though the causative crisis “had nothing to do with the costs of maintaining a modestly paid public workforce,” there has been “a barrage of political and media attacks on public employees” demanding reductions in their pay, job security, pensions and health care. This same pattern has been repeated “from New York to California, from Florida to Oregon, from Greece to Chile.”

The resolution notes that “it is at the heart of the damage so far. In the US, 23 states have imposed mandatory pay cuts on public sector workers in the form of furloughs over the last two fiscal years. Meanwhile the public is hurt as services are slashed: “since 2008, 30 states have cut funding for healthcare services to the elderly; 30 states have cut funding for K-12 education; and 41 states have cut funding for services to the elderly.”

Fighting Back

Emphasizing that “the role of a union is to fight back in the interest of all working people,” the PSC resolution commits the AFT to mounting a national campaign to oppose these attacks on public workers and to provide support to local and state units fighting against austerity measures.

“In the context of increased national attention to community colleges…new models for community colleges…can have profound national implications,” says a PSC-sponsored resolution on CUNY’s plan for a new community college.

The PSC’s position was shaped by months of discussion (see Clarion, March/April 2009). As a starting point, the resolution declares that the AFT “strongly supports expansion of public higher education and democratic opportunities for genuine academic innovation.”

Education issues & solidarity

From that standpoint, it notes that “while the AFT is open to the possibilities of a new CUNY community college, CUNY’s current colleges already contain a rich vein of innovation.” It also questions the “proposal of a new community college, CUNY星光, Cayman Islands, that appears to have little significance to overcrowding.”

The resolution “commends the CUNY faculty and staff who have worked to enrich the new community college” proposal, but goes on to raise a number of specific concerns “that must be addressed by the proposal to date:

- A new community college must mirror the current CUNY’s inverted and tenure-track faculty, whose primary appointment is at the new college. Its faculty must be organized in departments with elected chairs, with “faculty control over admissions, degree requirements, [and] curriculum,” and primary responsibility for hiring and tenure decisions.

- A new community college must maintain a minimum full-time/part-time faculty ratio of 70/30, a goal established in CUNY’s Master Plan and in the AFT’s Faculty and College Excellence proposals. “A faculty comprised mainly of adjuncts or of faculty whose primary appointment is at other colleges is unacceptable,” the resolution argues, since it would leave academic freedom, faculty members’ role in governance and the research capacity of the new institution all on shaky ground.

- Under CUNY’s plan, only students who can attend full time would be admitted for the first year – but the plan does not include stipends to replace the money that part-time students would otherwise earn. The resolution criticizes this as “an economic discrimination”; to get with the requirement that incoming students not need any remediation, “it violates CUNY’s policy of open admissions at the community colleges.

- A new school “must offer students a richer liberal arts education, not a diminished version of college.” The resolution notes with concern that CUNY’s plan calls for “only 12 majors, all of them designed to speed students to graduation.” While student success is a critically important goal, “to start with the instrumental goal of maximizing graduation rates and then design a curriculum to fit that goal is to work backwards,” the resolution says.

- “K-12 issues of privatization, charter schools, innovation and flexibility have been the focus...on test scores as the primary measure to assess student, teacher and institutional effectiveness are in the forefront of the AFT agenda. An Afghan war has demonstrated the dangers of parallel councils for higher education.

On another issue of higher education policy, a PSC-sponsored resolution would express the AFT’s support for federal financial aid for prisoners seeking a college education. Prisoners were eligible for Pell Grants until 1994, and programs offering higher education in prison had served as many as 27,000 students. After Congress made prisoners ineligible for Pell Grants in 1994, such programs were decimated. The PSC resolution notes that many studies have confirmed that prisoners have the same credentials by the time they are released as college graduates. The AFT resolution opposes any expansion of the war and calls instead for an immediate start to withdrawal of US troops. It argues that “the war and occupation of Afghanistan have demonstrably not removed the threat of terrorism by Al-Qaeda or other groups,” since “Al-Qaeda has largely left Afghanistan, but continues to operate elsewhere.” The war has nonetheless claimed the lives of more than one thousand Americans and 20,000 Afghans.

AFGHANISTAN

A final PSC resolution urges the nation to join with its allies to support the nonviolent protests in Afghanistan and to go beyond the interest of all working people and oppose continuation of the war. The resolution opposes expansion or extension of the war and calls instead for an immediate start to withdrawal of US troops. In the resolution opposes expansion or extension of the war and calls instead for an immediate start to withdrawal of US troops. It argues that “the war and occupation of Afghanistan have demonstrably not removed the threat of terrorism by Al-Qaeda or other groups,” since “Al-Qaeda has largely left Afghanistan, but continues to operate elsewhere.” The war has nonetheless claimed the lives of more than one thousand Americans and 20,000 Afghans.

A Final PSC resolution urges the national union to shift its policy of support for US foreign policy on Afghanistan and instead act in the interest of all working people and oppose continuation of the war. The resolution opposes expansion or extension of the war and calls instead for an immediate start to withdrawal of US troops. It argues that “the war and occupation of Afghanistan have demonstrably not removed the threat of terrorism by Al-Qaeda or other groups,” since “Al-Qaeda has largely left Afghanistan, but continues to operate elsewhere.” The war has nonetheless claimed the lives of more than one thousand Americans and 20,000 Afghans.

Focusing on the future

Maura Donohue, a third-year assistant professor of dance at Hunter College, listens intently during the Junior Faculty Professional Development Day program at the PSC Union Hall on May 7. Donohue said she wants to help other junior faculty make their way through the maze that is CUNY.

By KARAH WOODWARD & PETER HOGNESS

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The crisis in public higher ed

By ASHLEY DAWSON
College of Staten Island & the Graduate Center

The perennial crisis of higher education in the United States is getting a lot worse. California, the harbinger of so many dire political trends in this country, has provided a stream of ominous news for over a year: drastic budget cuts, unpaid furloughs and major tuition hikes. Strikes, building occupations and statewide political demands have sprang up in response – but even the strongest wave of campus activism since the Vietnam war has not been enough to turn the tide.

Serious cuts to public universities have been the order of the day in states across the nation. With the Obama administration’s Recovery and Reinvestment Act limiting some of the damage from the economic crash, most have not been as draconian as California’s. But this is the difference between then and now, and a new wave of proposed cuts threatens unusually hard times for CUNY.

Given the depth of this crisis, it behooves us to step back from the barricades briefly and take stock of how and why we got to our present calamitous state. Nancy Folbre’s Saving State U (Oxford University Press, 2010) and Christopher Newfield’s Unmaking the Public University (Harvard University Press, 2008) offer particularly useful, complementary perspectives on the crisis at this time.

Dismantling Public Higher Ed

Folbre, an economist who teaches at UMass, begins her book with the admission that, despite her academic discipline, she had known surprisingly little about the fiscal nuts and bolts of the crisis roiling states today. I dare say that she was not alone. Her book underlines the urgency of building such knowledge and the targeted interventions that suggest if public education is to be saved and even strengthened in states such as California and New York.

Folbre takes readers through a whirlwind history of the US public university, offering condensed accounts of the founding of state colleges and universities in the 19th century, the expansion that followed World War II, and the ethnic and gender integration of public institutions that followed the civil rights movement and the Great Society programs of the 1960s.

Folbre also offers an account of the assault on public education that has unfolded since the 1970s. In this, one of the most valuable sections of the book, she examines how a rebellion against spiraling property taxes in California mutated like a virulent virus into a national attack on public funding in general. Even morevaluably, Folbre explains exactly how measures such as California’s notorious Proposition 13 created a fiscal crisis for the states, one which they “have solved” by slashing funding for higher education and other public programs.

Newfield’s On the Margins of the Public University also looks at the Great Recession that began in 2008. This crisis, she argues, offers advocates of public higher education an opportunity since it underscores both the fallacious nature of cuts favoring the wealthy and other policies that have fueled spiraling inequality in the US over the last generation. Folbre shows how such programs have produced not only a less just and stable country, but have also contributed to the dismantling of public higher education. For instance, Saving State U includes a detailed discussion of the way in which federal financial aid programs have softened the blow of reduced state funding for public higher education – at the cost of ensuring that the public subsidizes private colleges and universities attended predominantly by students whose families are more well-to-do. Saving State U concludes with aousing call to expand access for all qualified students by making public higher education free, as is in most economically developed countries. Folbre points to states such as Georgia that have already pioneered programs of free higher ed for students graduating in the top percentiles of their high school class. Rather than seeing such programs as an entitlement, however, Folbre suggests that advocates for public education emphasize responsibilities as well as rights; more specifically, she champions work programs for all students attending state-supported institutions (rather than just for the economically needy).

To fulfill this vision of equity and access would require a return to progressive taxation on the federal, state and local levels and a move away from the inequitable labor practices that have made public universities paradigms of precariousness rather than social justice. And that is a tall order.

Culture Wars

The project of fiscal education and reform that Folbre advocates may be attractive and even empowering for champions of public higher education. But while better public understanding of economics may be necessary, it is unlikely to be sufficient to reverse the ideology that associates all spheres of government with corruption and ineptitude.

We may be living through the bitter outcome of deregulation’s failures – but ideologies of privatization seem to keep returning from the grave like hungry zombies. Anti-government doctrines can live on like the undead because they are not primarily grounded in rational examination of the impact of dismantling the public sphere, but rather in deep-seated cultural reflexes from within and to a certain extent against the mass university of the postwar period, overlapped with sweeping denunciations of the racist, imperialist, sexist, homophbic values embraced by the country’s elite and embodied in much of the established curricula. This upsurge in the academy is often shorthanded as “the 1980s,” but Newfield looks most radically at the social roots and philosophical implications of this.

The reaction of elites, according to Newfield, was to unleash a renewed wave of “‘cultural and moral war’ rhetoric,” which is “dangerous” to our country and its values. Newfield calls on advocates for public higher education to make that case as intrinsic, important, he believes, because it enriches people’s lives, not just their bank accounts. It’s this kind of transformation, of which being an informed civic actor is just one part, that Newfield wants to highlight. Wide access to college is important, but seldom leads to immediately profitable applications. Instead, it is the high enrollments in relatively inexpensive fields such as the arts, humanities and social sciences that subsidize the natural sciences.

Newfield makes these arguments not to score points for one hemisphere of the academy. He is after a better public understanding of what he terms “academic capitalism” and “academic capitalism’s Recovery and Reinvestment Act limited the nation. With the Obama administration’s project. For instance, Newfield underscores the common perception that scientific research brings in external funds and therefore supports the university, while fields like art history and cultural anthropology are non-marketable boondoggles. The truth, Newfield shows, is completely the opposite: scientific research is important, but seldom leads to immediately profitable applications. Instead, it is the high enrollments in relatively inexpensive fields such as the arts, humanities and social sciences that subsidize the natural sciences.

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In their new book, *Understanding the Crash*, financial writer Eric Laursen and artists Seth Tobocman and Jess Wehrle harness the grammar of graphic novels to a non-fiction purpose: providing a clear explanation of the 2008 economic crash.

With striking images of barracudas in business suits and tumbling dice, the book examines what caused the crash, how it has affected people’s lives and how community organizations have responded. Below is an excerpt from *Understanding the Crash*.

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**ECONOMIC PICTURE**

The crash

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**STARTING IN THE 1970S**

Banks experimented with new types of mortgages.

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**ONE NEW PRODUCT THAT QUICKLY BECAME POPULAR WAS THE “ADJUSTABLE RATE MORTGAGE” OR ARM WHERE THE INTEREST RATE ON THE LOAN...**

---

**BUT AFTER A FEW YEARS, THE RATE MIGHT INCREASE.**

---

**ONE OF THE NEW PRODUCTS THAT QUICKLY BECAME POPULAR WAS THE “ADJUSTABLE RATE MORTGAGE” OR ARM WHERE THE INTEREST RATE ON THE LOAN...**

---

**THESE FOLKS WERE BETTING THAT THEIR INCOMES WOULD INCREASE IN A FEW YEARS SO THEY COULD PAY THE HIGHER RATES. THEY WERE ALSO GAMBLING THAT THEIR HOMES WOULD GO UP IN VALUE. IF THIS HAPPENED, BANKS WOULD BE HAPPY TO LET THEM BORROW AGAINST THAT VALUE BY TAKING OUT HOME EQUITY LOANS. THEY COULD TAKE OUT A 2ND MORTGAGE TO PAY OFF THE 1ST.**

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**IT’S UNDERSTANDABLE WHY A PERSON IN NEED OF A HOME WOULD TAKE A RISK, BUT WHY WOULD A BANK GAMBLE IN THIS WAY?**

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**BECAUSE BANKS WEREN’T KEEPING THOSE LOANS ON THEIR BOOKS, BANKS THAT ORIGINATED MORTGAGES WERE SELLING THOSE MORTGAGES TO LARGER BANKS. GOVERNMENT DeregULATION HAD MADE THIS EASY TO DO.**

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**THE MORE MONEY PEOPLE OWED, THE MORE OF THIS “VALUABLE DEBT” THERE WAS FOR BANKS TO BUY, SELL AND SPECULATE UPON.**

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Adapted from *Understanding the Crash* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2010)
On June 1, ten students and recent college graduates went on a 10-day hunger strike outside Senator Charles Schumer’s office building in midtown.

They sought to prod Schumer, a supporter of the DREAM Act and chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration, to move the legislation forward now for passage this year. Though the activists ended their strike 10 days later without a commitment from Schumer, it was clear they had raised the national profile of the issue, NYSYLC activist Mariel Ramos said. “We ended our strike, but Dreamers in North Carolina picked up where we left off. And we took the struggle to Washington, DC, July 19 to 21.”

LIMO

Wearing T-shirts reading “Starve 4 Our DREAMs,” the activists braved the heat and rain, sleeping on the sidewalk in front of the office building and a Wachovia bank branch, consuming only water and vitamins while they talked to passersby, supporters and the media about why undocumented immigrant students need the DREAM Act, and why they need it now.

The DREAM Act would provide temporary legal status to undocumented immigrant young people who were brought to the United States by their parents before the age of 16, have lived in the US continuously for five years and graduate high school. If they complete two years of college or military service, they would be eligible for permanent residency and, eventually, citizenship. The legislation has been in the works for almost a decade.

Ten DREAM Act activists have ended their 10-day hunger strike outside Senator Charles Schumer’s mid-Manhattan office. But now, more than ever, we need to join with them to keep the pressure on our elected representatives.

The DREAM Act would provide temporary legal status to tens of thousands of young people—including many current or former CUNY students—who were brought to the US by their parents before the age of 16. It would give those who commit to college a path to citizenship. The legislation has been in the works for almost a decade.

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On June 1, ten students and recent college graduates went on a 10-day hunger strike outside Senator Charles Schumer’s office building in midtown.

They sought to prod Schumer, a supporter of the DREAM Act and chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration, to move the legislation forward now for passage this year. Though the activists ended their strike 10 days later without a commitment from Schumer, it was clear they had raised the national profile of the issue, NYSYLC activist Mariel Ramos said. “We ended our strike, but Dreamers in North Carolina picked up where we left off. And we took the struggle to Washington, DC, July 19 to 21.”

LIMO

Wearing T-shirts reading “Starve 4 Our DREAMs,” the activists braved the heat and rain, sleeping on the sidewalk in front of the office building and a Wachovia bank branch, consuming only water and vitamins while they talked to passersby, supporters and the media about why undocumented immigrant students need the DREAM Act, and why they need it now.

The DREAM Act would provide temporary legal status to undocumented immigrant young people who were brought to the United States by their parents before the age of 16, have lived in the US continuously for five years and graduate high school. If they complete two years of college or military service, they would be eligible for permanent residency and, eventually, citizenship. The legislation has been in the works for almost a decade.

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